THE ABANDONED CHILD IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN LITERATURE AND FILM

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the motif of the abandoned child as a symptom of postwar German memory culture in German literature and film from the late 1980s to the second decade of the 21st century. As part of German postwar memory culture, the abandoned child motif emerged in the early postwar years and established itself in German memory discourse as *Kriegskind* (war baby), while representing certain war-related experiences of victimization. This study focuses on the change the motif reflects against the backdrop of Germany's unification, the surge toward normalization, and globalization. The abandoned child motif in German cultural texts at the end of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st century is a threshold figure which is symptomatic of the past as well as the present, of the victim and the perpetrator, and of suffering as well as guilt. It therefore serves as a sensitive indicator of how these aspects of German memory culture are negotiated against the backdrop of contemporary national and global events.

The works in Chapter 2 are anchored in the experience of postwar childhood abandonment and parental conflicts. The abandoned child motif in these texts from the dawn of and during the post-*Wende* years reflects attempts at breaking away from the generational conflict and the West German postwar perspective. The texts discussed in Chapter 3 fulfill the detachment from the second generation's parental conflict by creating a narrative construct that reflects a generational shift. The abandoned child in

these texts still emphasizes the familial connection to World War II and the Holocaust, but reveals an increase in generational perspectives as well as Jewish victim perspectives. The texts in Chapter 4 continue the trend towards the multiplication of perspectives. Rather than the familial involvement in the past, the abandoned child motif in the texts of Chapter 4 pertains to more general questions, addressing Germany's role in facing the global challenges of the beginning of the 21st century, all the while still considering the country's past.

For Kaia and Gwendolyn

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In September 2015, during the year's climax of Syrian refugees trying to seek protection in Europe from their war-torn home, an image of a drowned Syrian child went around the world. Like thousands of other refugees that year, the child's family had attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea in a rubber dinghy to reach Greece and therefore the European Union. Yet the boat capsized, leading to the drowning of the boy among other children and adults. In the public imagination, the image of the boy came to represent the human catastrophe of thousands of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean Sea on their way to Europe in particular, and the situation of refugees at the beginning of the 21st century in general. The image had a remarkable impact in social media and circulated under the hashtag *Humanity Washed Ashore*, describing the situation of the child, as well as the refugees he represents, as abandoned by humanity (*Humanity Washed Ashore* Huffington Post). Studies have shown how the image not only drew attention to the humanitarian crisis surrounding the refugees, but altered the public opinion of many Western nations regarding immigration and thus served as a means to spur empathy toward refugees among Westerners (unfortunately, skepticism or even xenophobia has been spurred otherwise as well) (*Tragic Boy Aylan's Image Saw 'Refugee' Word Outstrip 'Migrant' in Tweets – Study* Press Association). The image of the dead

child quickly led to accusations about humanity's failure in the face of human suffering. Failure of humanity is most commonly associated with the Holocaust, explaining perhaps why Germany is accepting refugees in numbers that far exceed those admitted by its European and other Western equivalents. It is not far-fetched to speculate that rather than coming from an untainted altruistic conviction, Germany's political decision to open its borders to Syrian refugees may still be a response to the country's past.

The motif of the victimized child, which is so powerfully invoked in the picture of the drowned Syrian boy, within the context of German cultural memory is inseparably linked to the Nazi past. Originating in the experience of the German *Kriegskind* (war baby), the abandoned child has emerged as a motif to describe perceived victimization of Germans. Even though it underwent significant generational and political changes, the motif of the abandoned child as a symbol of German victimization lasts into the postunification period.

This study examines the abandoned child as a site and symptom of conflict in contemporary German literary texts. By examining the motif of the abandoned child in post-*Wende* German cultural texts, this dissertation traces the evolution of the abandoned child motif as a symbol of German victimhood in texts written against the background of the unification, Germany's surge toward normalcy, contemporary global conflicts, and immigration. Who, in these texts, receives the empathy the motif of an abandoned child evokes, and how do this empathy and its receiver stand in relationship to Germany's past? With its origin in German victim discourse, the image of the abandoned child is a complex motif that lends itself to evaluating Germany's responses regarding contemporary events and its relationship to its troubling past.

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In order to better grasp the complex concept of the postwar abandoned child in the German context—a victim among the perpetrators—, I shall provide insight into the impact World War II had on (German) children. In her preface to *Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II*, Zarah Tara points out that World War II is notorious for the suffering of children, identifying it as a conflict with "unprecedented violence against children":

> Contemporaries often described the Second World War as a "war against children." The plight of Europe's so-called "lost children" during World War II— children who were hungry, displaced, orphaned, murdered— will be familiar to anyone who has seen images of children in contemporary zones of crisis. (ix)

Of the children who survived this conflict, Tara illustrates that in Europe an estimated 15 million children were displaced and about 13 million children lost one or both of their parents in the war (4, 6). Undernourishment, illness, and psychological trauma affected nearly all of these children.[1]

Beyond the immediate impact by persecution and war, the loss of a parent, a sibling, or home, the effects caused by this crisis lasted far into the postwar years and affected familial life such as parent-child-relationships (Tara 6). I will describe these effects of war with the term *abandonment*, as they entail the intentional or unintentional

[1] Tara highlights that due to being a target of German persecution and systematic killing, Jewish children only accounted for a small percentage of the surviving children, and had generally gone through a larger period of suffering due to persecution and displacement that had started years before the actual war (Tara 11). Also, children of Nazi-occupied Eastern European countries suffered for longer periods of conflict starting with the occupation of Poland, while German children did not begin to be affected in large numbers until the beginning of the allied air raids of Western Germany in 1942, continuing throughout the capitulation in 1945 and the expulsion from the Eastern territories (Stargardt 12). According to L. Shields and B. Bryan's article *The Effect of War on Children: The Children in Europe after World War II* published in the *International Nursing Review*, 100% of all children in war-affected Europe were undernourished, 80% of the children in Czechoslovakia alone were infected with tuberculosis, and Zara Tara provides anecdotal accounts of children's mental health through letters and other statements of care takers and counselors of displaced children of the time (Shields and Bryan, 90, 92, and Tara, 7-10).

neglect of the needs and care of a child.

Although many scholars have elaborated on the silencing of experiences related to the war and the Holocaust by victims as well as perpetrators, the childhood experience made its way into German postwar memory culture fairly soon, perhaps as part of denying the confrontation with one's guilt. On the side of Jewish victims, only a handful of texts have become well-known. Ilse Aichinger expresses Jewish childhood experience under Nazi occupation in Austria in her 1948 novel *Die größere Hoffnung*, and Jurek Becker's much later debut novel *Jakob, der Lügner* (1969) deals with life in the ghetto of Łodz, Poland during the German occupation. Becker's novel includes an abandoned child, yet the protagonist and narrator is an adult. Ruth Klüger reveals her childhood experience in Terezin and Auschwitz much later in her 1992 autobiography *Weiter leben. Eine Jugend*. The few postwar German-Jewish accounts of literary abandandoned children reflect the decline of German-Jewish (literary) voices due to the Holocaust in general.

Many more accounts of non-Jewish experiences of childhood abandonment entered the realm of German writing. Wolfgang Borchert's well-known short story *Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch...* illustrates an image of a child who not only is gravely traumatized by the impact of aerial warfare but, as he stands guard to ward off rats from his dead younger brother's body beneath the rubble, he is abandoned in the midst of (post)war chaos:

> Und du passt nun auf die Ratten auf? fragte der Mann. Auf die doch nicht! Und dann sagte er ganz leise: Mein Bruder, der liegt nämlich da unten. Da. Jürgen zeigte mit dem Stock auf die zusammengesackten Mauern. Unser Haus kriegte eine Bombe. Mit einmal war das Licht weg im Keller. Und er auch. Wir haben noch gerufen. Er war viel kleiner als ich. Erst vier. Er muss hier ja noch sein. Er ist doch viel kleiner als ich. (Borchert

Gesamtwerk 296)

> (So you're on guard for the rats? Asked the man. Not for the rats! And then he said it very softly: My brother. He's lying under there. There. Jürgen pointed at the collapsed wall with the stick. A bomb hit our house. All of a sudden the lights went out in the basement. And him, too. We called and called for him. He was a lot smaller than me. He just turned four. He has to be there somewhere. He really is much smaller than me [Translation by Robert Painter *Exchanges Literary Journal*]).

Although the boy finds an adult who befriends him, Borchert's war scenario describes a situation in which a disruptive event in history impacts the life of a child in that he suffers great emotional neglect.[2]

However, the ethical implications of the experience of the German child are highly ambivalent as the depiction of abandoned German non-Jewish children needs to be placed in relationship to German responsibility. Due to the potentially sentimentalizing power of the image of a suffering child, texts that employ these images run the risk of distorting the victim-perpetrator relationship. As part of West Germany's memory culture from the 1960s, Marcel Reich-Ranicki criticizes in *Deutsche Literatur in West und Ost: Prosa seit 1945* Heinrich Böll's early depiction of victims of war (mainly women and children) as a distorted focus that evades the real postwar problem of commemorating the victims of the Holocaust apropriately (132-33). Nevertheless, the war-related experience of childhood abandonment remains profoundly important in German postwar memory culture, and evolves, as I will elaborate in more depth later, into a cultural motif which, directly or as subtext, not only permeates literature but German postwar film as well.[3]

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[2] Donald Winnicott describes holding environment as the ordinary circumstances in which a child's needs for physical and emotional care and attention are met in order to develop a healthy object-relationship (see *The Child and the Family and the Outside World*).

[3] The German journalist Sabine Bode elaborates in her 2004 book *Die vergessene Generation: Die Kriegskinder brechen ihr Schweigen* the childhood memory of *Kriegs- und Flüchtlingskindern* (children who experienced war and expulsion) based on interviews and conversations. Bode focuses on traumatic war experiences, such as loss of family members, injury, hunger and homelessness under the aspect of

The motif is not only limited to the experience of individuals but expands to a more abstract level, representing an entire generation. Thus the motif of the abandoned child in German postwar memory culture--often referred to as *Kriegskind* (war baby)--has been a significant site of interpretation of the past.

Like memory culture itself, the motif of the abandoned child evolves with time. Several scholars have outlined the relationship between the depiction of a child and the cultural background of the text. Debbie Pinfold illustrates in her book *The Child's View of the Third Reich in German Literature: The Eye among the Blind* (2001) that the understanding of the nature of the child and its depiction in Western culture has undergone continuous changes with time, underlining that the depiction of the child as literary motif is imbued with cultural values.[4] Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle, and Naomi Sokoloff state in their introduction to *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature* (1994),

> [T]he experience of childhood is unutterable und thus lost to the adult: the child goes through it but lacks the language to convey its reality to others, while the adult writer commands the full resources of language but is largely cut off from children's consciousness….The relative inarticulateness of children makes any representation of their consciousness necessarily a tentative and fundamentally artificial construction of adult writers and audiences. (3)

One's inability to retrieve childhood experience and portray it authentically turns the child into a highly attractive and powerful symbol of adults' "fantasy, fear, and desire,"

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recovering silenced and repressed trauma of an aging generation. Bode's book gained high popularity among Germans and reached a 20th edition in 2014.

[4] Pinfold describes how in Western culture children have been endowed with the idea of innocence and vulnerability since Rousseau's *Emile* contested the idea of the Original Sin and promoted the notion of innate human goodness (10-11). Romanticism picked up on the idea of innocence and introduced the child figure of redemptive qualities (12-13). Although the cultural perspective of the child has gone through changes since then, the idea of innocence and vulnerability has endured. Although psychoanalysis challenged the notion of innocence in that it declared the child a sexual being and blurred the border between childhood and adulthood, at the same time, it emphasized the notion of vulnerability due to the concept of childhood trauma (20-25).

as Marianne Hirsch puts it (*The Generation of Postmemory* 162). Goodenough, Heberle, and Sokoloff go on to say that "many texts written from a child's viewpoint are brilliantly creative, subversive, or compensatory precisely because children speak from a realm as yet unappropriated, or only partially appropriated, by social or cultural intentionality" (4). Thus, the abandoned child as literary motif lends itself particularly well to expressing what the British scholar Terry Eagleton calls a "'symptomatic' point of ambiguity…which we as readers are able to 'write' even if the novel itself does not" (155). The abandoned child in postwar German literature provides important clues to the unconscious aspects, the subtexts, as Eagleton calls them, that are deeply connected to current German memory culture.[5]

As an expression of a culture's "yet unappropriated, or only partially appropriated" fantasy, fear, and desire regarding its past, this study focuses on the depiction of the abandoned child in German literary texts produced shortly before the country's unification in 1989 through the 21st century (Goodenough, Heberle, and Sokoloff 4). The motif of the abandoned child does not merely provide another child perspective, but rather, due to the situation of abandonment, victim status is immanent to it. Within the German postwar context, considering Germany's guilt and responsibility, it means it is a motif fraught with tension. This study examines the motif in contemporary literature in order to show how current German memory culture negotiates the tension between victim and perpetrator by recontextualizing the motif in ever changing

[5] In his elaboration on the psychoanalytical approach to literature in *Literary Theory*, Terry Eagleton describes a subtext as "a text which runs within [the novel], visible at certain 'symptomatic' points of ambiguity, evasion or overemphasis, and which we as readers are able to 'write' even if the novel itself does not. All literary works contain one or more such sub-texts, and there is a sense in which they may be spoken of as the 'unconscious' of the work itself. The work's insights, as with all writing, are deeply related to its blindnesses: what it does not say, and *how* it does not say it, may be as important as what it articulates; what seems absent, marginal or ambivalent about it may provide a central clue to its meanings" (155).

generationanal and political frameworks.

While the motif of the abandoned child represented in West German postwar literature a German victim status that was related to war or fascism, this project--by examining the abandoned child motif in contemporary German memory culture--seeks answers to questions like the following: What kind of transformations has the motif undergone? Who is portrayed as (child) victim? Do other historical or social events, such as the fall of the Wall, cause abandonment and what would that tell us about German memory culture? How often is the *Kriegskind* still used in German cultural texts after the *Wende* and how is it portrayed from the perspective of further generations in a unified Germany?

The motif of the abandoned child in German cultural texts after the late 1980s reflects the multiplication of perspectives on the past in German memory culture of the last three decades. The depiction of the abandoned child in recent texts lends itself particularly to expressing views that go beyond previous perspectives of victimhood and perpetratorship, reflecting political changes, generational shifts, and, particularly against the backdrop of globalization, a larger variety of ways to identify with the past.

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As the motif of the abandoned child this project examines is rooted in war or immediate postwar experience, and, as I argue, has developed a continuity as a German postwar motif, it is crucial to provide a brief review of the motif in texts of the postwar decades from 1945 through the 1980s. This review will discuss texts that have played an important part in shaping the motif.

The first postwar decade witnessed a fair number of mostly young German writers

who dealt with their war experiences as returning soldiers, delivering a literary image of Germany in rubble, which has become commonly known as *Trümmerliteratur* (Schlant *Language of Silence* 22). Aside from Wolfgang Borchert, whose *Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch…* I mentioned earlier, Heinrich Böll addresses children's war experience in his work, which contributed greatly to shaping the narrative of German war experience through the perspective of the child. Ernestine Schlant notes in her renowned 1999 study of West German literature *The Language of Silence* that

> Many Germans identified with his little guys in the difficult years following the end of the war. Böll wrote about the soldiers at the front and returning home to cities in ruins and without food, and about the deprivation of those living in the rubble and trying to cope despite their traumatized state. (36)

Among these "little guys" Böll's early work frequently illustrates the war-affected life of literally little guys: German childhood disrupted by war and particularly by parental abandonment due to war circumstances. As the weakest link in the social structure of the family, children portray the magnitude of the postwar chaos due to loss of family members and the general state of emergency. In *Haus ohne Hüter* (1954), Böll describes two German families that suffer the loss of their fathers due to the war. The families, although from different economic backgrounds, are structured according to the common expectations of gender roles of that time. While the mothers not only struggle with their personal loss but also with redefining their role as mothers without the husband on their side, the children in the two families struggle with the loss of their father figure, the grief and preoccupation of their mothers, and a premature demand of replacing the paternal role. Böll's short story *Lohengrins Tod* also describes the life (and death) of an abandoned boy taking over a parental role for his siblings during the chaotic postwar years (published in *Wanderer kommst du nach Spa…* 1950). After falling off a coal train,

the boy (Lohengrin) suffers severe injuries from which he dies. While Lohengrin is already abandoned by his parents, his treatment at the hospital after his accident reveals a cruel postwar world, lacking compassion especially toward children. In addition to disrupted families, the chaos renders a lack of empathy and an infrastructure working on its bare minimum. Also Böll's *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* (1953), another novel about a German postwar family, shows abandoned children in the early postwar years. Although both parents are present, the Bogner family--poverty stricken--lost its home during an air raid and lives in a dilapidated apartment in the destroyed city of Cologne. The father, traumatized by war experience, is an alcoholic and starts to beat his children. He leaves his wife and the children to prevent further abuse. The social environment of the Bogners shows other cases of postwar hardship and abandoned children, making abandoned children and struggling families a common theme of postwar Cologne. Böll portrays children as victims whose innocence reflects the violence of the disruption caused by the war, which, considering the popularity of his writing, possibly helped establish the motif of the abandoned child in postwar German memory culture.

Schlant underlines Böll's focus on the victimization of the little guy, opposing "[h]is negative characterization of Germans who had been in positions of power during the Nazi regime and were maneuvering to regain these positions [which] echoed the sentiment of many" (36). The superior vs. inferior distinction regarding the distribution of responsibility places the underdog in Böll's texts in a child-like and the superior in a traitorous but parental position, solely responsible but abandoning the inferior in the postwar misery. The association of the underdog with an innocent child who was betrayed receives further weight in Böll's short story *Wanderer kommst du nach Spa…*

(1950). A seriously injured youth soldier is admitted to a military hospital which the protagonist recognizes as the former *Gymnasium* (secondary school) he attended just a few months earlier because he sees the writing on the blackboard. The title of the short story is an incomplete sentence, which the protagonist's philology teacher had written on the black board and which is still visible at the time of the soldier's medical treatment. It alludes to the humanist focus of the school and belies the prewar glorification of military service.[6] Furthermore, he juxtaposes the soldier's recent situation as a child with his now mutilated body and soul as a war veteran (Baumbach "'Wanderer kommst du nach Sparta'" 2-3). Böll emphasizes the young age of many soldiers and thus the betrayal of these young men but also facilitates a reading of soldiers as innocent and betrayed victims. This constellation allows for a reading that places child victims and adults in an equal category of victims. Böll's early texts may have contributed to a discourse of Germans as victims in which the traumatized child is a central figure. Centralizing the abandoned child as a national postwar German figure encourages the opportunity for postwar German society to view itself as an abandoned child and therefore as innocent.

After the division of Germany in 1949 the deprivation of the early postwar years turned into vigorous nation-building efforts in both East and West Germany. The West received financial support through the Marshall Plan and started to prosper quickly. Schlant summarizes that this period saw "much pride in the speed and thoroughness of the recovery, in the work ethic, and the country's economic success, but no questions were asked about Germany's role in the war that now led to this frantic activity," which

[6] The title of the short story refers to a distich by Simonides as translated from ancient Greek by Friedrich Schiller: "Wanderer, kommst du nach Sparta, verkündige dorten, du habest / Uns hier liegen gesehn, wie das Gesetz es befahl." It is the inscription of a Greek monument commemorating and praising the heroic death of Spartan soldiers during the war against Persia 480 BC (Baumbach 1).

was a position much supported by Konrad Adenauer's conservative politics of the time (52). These recovery efforts in West Germany have become known as a means to repress the war and the Holocaust and addressing Germany's guilt. During the Adenauer administration West German postwar memory culture coined the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, expressing, as Christine Anton describes it in her introduction to *Beyond Political Correctness: Remapping German Sensibilities in the 21th Century*, the desire "to overcome or master the past" similarly to the economic recovery and physical reconstruction of the 1950s (6).

At the height of the West German economic recovery, the depiction of the child as victim transforms into a *chiffre* of conjured ignorance to avoid taking responsibility in Günter Grass' *Die Blechtrommel* (The Tin Drum 1959). The novel features Oskar Matzerath, a child born during the Nazi period, who refuses to grow up. Debbie Pinfold states that, aside from his repellent dwarf appearance, Oskar Matzerath's "mental processes too are extremely disconcerting, for this pseudo-child assumes the apparent ignorance of childhood to distance himself from the events around him, disclaiming all knowledge and responsibility" (147). Thus, *Die Blechtrommel* addresses, from a critical perspective, the desire to evade questions about one's responsibility by assuming a child-like status and therefore responds indirectly to the postwar image of the child victim as portrayed in Böll's early texts that allows for a wide spectrum of identification among postwar German society. *Die Blechtrommel* was one of the first self-critical texts, which became internationally acclaimed, addressing Germany's past in a wider context of responsibility and the repression thereof in West Germany.

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In the 1960s in West German literature, the motif of the abandoned child moved into the focus of intergenerational conflicts involving the generation that witnessed the war as adults and their children. Part of this conflict was the confrontation of the war generation with their involvement in the war and the Holocaust, as events such as the Adolf Eichmann trial (1961) in Jerusalem and the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt/Main (1963-65) increased attention toward German responsibility. As Stuart Parkes observes, after the Auschwitz trials "awareness of the past was growing among younger people" who started to challenge their parents' generation's silence about the war and the Holocaust, leading to increasing dissent with West German politics (*Writers and Politics* 75). The generational discord was mostly felt in the student protest movement in West Germany at the end of the decade. While a large number of the student movement settled with the political shift in the Federal Republic from the conservative CDU government to the Social Democrats (SPD) in 1972, splinter groups transferred their fervor into political terrorism. The students' protest against their parents' generation was informed by themes of the postwar West German abandoned child, as the political stance was often influenced by the personal grievance about the perceived failure of the parents regarding their parenting methods (Schlant 82). Yet the abandoned child motif behind this conflict comes to the fore in this generation's literary assessment of their parental conflicts, in many of which the writers draw a connection between their childhood and upbringing and their adult conflicts with the parents.

Ernestine Schlant elaborates, in her third chapter of *The Language of Silence*, how a number of former members of the student movement rendered belatedly a large amount

of prose text expressing their challenge with their parents.[7] This so-called *Väterliteratur* (which addresses both parents but shows a stronger emphasis on the patriarchal role of the father) is in many cases autobiographically motivated and revolves around a personal challenging of the parents' generation, their involvement in the war as perpetrators, victims, or bystanders, or blurred versions of several of the above (Schlant 81). Following the model of Bernward Vesper's 1971 *Die Reise*, in which the late author attempts to understand the role and the National-Socialist conviction of his father, several authors—mostly male—chose a literary path, often after decades of silence, to start a dialogue with their fathers' role in the family and during the Nazi era (many of whom had been already deceased) (85). As part of this literary confrontation, Schlant continues, many authors critically assess their parents' childrearing practices, which are portrayed as ideologically influenced by fascism and therefore as psychologically and physically abusive, as not meeting the child's needs, frigid and lacking in compassion (85).[8] In his novel *Vaterspuren* (Father Traces 1979), Siegfried Gauch tries to understand the development of his father's Nazi career by studying documents of that time, remembering conversations with his father and by imagining his late father's answers to the questions

[7] See chapter three, *Autobiographical Novels: Generational Discords*, in Ernestine Schlant's *The Language of Silence*.

[8] Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich elaborated on the socio-psychological background of German guilt in their groundbreaking 1967 study *The Inability to Mourn* (English translation 1975). The Mitscherlichs discuss the psychological conditions behind the silence of the majority of the German war generation. After Germany's surrender, when confronted with the international perspective on Germany's war atrocities, the condemnation of former ideologies, and the sudden loss of the leader figure, many Germans, according to the Mitscherlichs, discovered the evil in what was loved and lost, and "thus the evil in oneself" (xi). According to the authors, many chose a separation of "acceptable and unacceptable memories" in order to cope with this psychic conflict (xii). Due to the psychic energy invested in the separation of memory, a large group of the war generation suffered from what Mitscherlich calls "psychic numbing" (xii). This state of preoccupation, according to Mitscherlich, can be generally understood as the resistance to building psychic bonds with people and other aspects of life that could potentially challenge the separation of acceptable and unacceptable memories. Yet, the Mitscherlichs' study also illustrates that the relationship between the first postwar generation and their parents might have been shaped by the sense of abandonment due to the reduced psychic interaction, blocked empathy, and thus silence between parents and children.

he has. Yet the barrier between son/author and father persists throughout the novel. Gauch describes the father as dogmatic, stalwart, and self-opinionated, remaining a figure embodying the Nazi past despite Gauch's attempt to understand. While Gauch's novel focuses on the father's role during World War II, Christoph Meckel's 1980 novel *Suchbild: Über meinen Vater* provides detailed insight into his childhood relationship with his father, who is described as a Nazi follower. Meckel draws a melancholic picture of a loveless childhood in which the father showed little interest in the children and corporal punishment happened on a regular basis. In *Väterliteratur*, the abandoned child is the narrating voice: many of the authors see themselves as victims of the type of upbringing and generate a sense of childhood abandonment as one of the major identity forming aspects of their lives (86-89).[9] Moreover, in congruence with the preceding political upheaval against the government, the generation of *Väterliteratur* conflates the experience of childhood abandonment with a rather abstract level of national identity.

The relationship between the abandoned child experience and the political development of the West German nation gets further emphasis in the evolution of postwar West German film. Similarly to postwar West German literature, postwar West German film reflects issues related to generational conflicts. The motif of the abandoned child can be found in numerous films. Wenders's *Alice in den Städten* (*Alice in the Cities*, 1974) deals with the search for a nine-year-old's mother who left her daughter alone with a strange man. In Helma Sanders-Brahms's *Deutschland, bleiche Mutter* (*Germany, Pale Mother*, 1980), Anna, a *Kriegskind* (war baby), deals with the effects of

[9] Schlant also points out that many of the protagonists show signs of an inappropriate style of child rearing or even abandonment of their children themselves, as, i.e., Vesper takes his three-year-old son on a drug abuse spree through Europe before he leaves him with relatives and commits himself to a mental institution (89).

her missing father, his postwar brutalization, and the emotional aloofness of her mother. Films that do not have child lead roles often involve children as extras, underlining the prevailing hypersensitive and vulnerable mood of the films by contrasting the innocence of childhood against a harsh, often postwar, adult world.[10] In addition, as Sabine Hake points out in her book *German National Film* (2002), New German Cinema frequently depicts a young adult lead (often male) in a crisis-laden child-parent relationship, either with an actual parent or parent-type (patriarchal) figure. This relationship gives rise to the atmosphere of melancholy, alienation, and loneliness typical for New German Cinema (Hake 173).

The motif of the abandoned child not only relates to the literal childhood experience but also to the postwar development of the group of German filmmakers associated with New German Cinema. This heterogeneous group holds, as Thomas Elsaesser argues, opposing positions. According to Elsaesser, liberal internationalism and conservationist regionalism are directly or indirectly negotiated among the films: "A common stock of motifs, quotations, autocitations and oppositions suggest that the films, together, form a kind of synthetic mythology, restating, but also not altogether contained within, the master-narrative of the 'German question'" (214). Elsaesser isolates three concerns from the narrative of New German Cinema: 1. The question of continuity/discontinuity, mostly in respect to fascism; 2. The family as concerned with personal identity and patriarchal authority; 3. Legitimacy, which overarches the previous two complexes as it deals with film as "social text and symbolic action" (Elsaesser 214).

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[10] Margarete von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit* (*Marianne and Juliane* 1981) is based on the lives of Christiane and Gudrun Ensslin, the latter of whom was radicalized in the Red Army Faction. Gudrun had a son with Bernward Vesper who is portrayed at a young age as being exposed to and negatively affected by the disturbances of his parents' life.

At the center of these complexes one finds an underlying key figure: the abandoned child whose continuous mission appears to be to "master the past" (215).

Elsaesser identifies the motif of the abandoned child as one of the few pervading commonalities in the diversity of New German Cinema. Yet the motif is not only a filmic one, but rather permeates film, its makers, and their social surroundings, all of which are "layers of social texts and symbolic actions" (Elsaesser 214). Elsaesser mentions the abandoned child within the context of the role that Lotte Eisner, a German Jewish director and film critic living in Paris, played for most of the NGC filmmakers.[11] In 1974, Werner Herzog finished *Kaspar Hauser* (a film about the German *mythos* of the abandoned child *par excellence*) and traveled with his film by foot to Paris to visit Eisner. He presented his film to her, as if, as Elsaesser says, to receive "her blessings, by assuring him that his work was once more 'legitimate German culture'" (215). Elsaesser interprets Herzog's highly symbolic gesture as "a founding myth of origins and identity," with which he made Eisner the "super-mother" of the abandoned child: postwar young German film (215).

Sanders-Brahms's *Germany, Pale Mother* thematizes the filmic equivalent of issues of the second generation from a female perspective: the physical absence or loss of one or even both parents due to the war. In what might be read as a typical evolution of family dynamics from the war to the postwar period, the film's depiction of the family reveals multiple facets of the issue. The plot revolves around the family's life during the war and in the immediate postwar period. Anna's parents, Hans and Lene, meet shortly before the war. Soon thereafter Hans has to leave as he is conscripted into the

[11] Lotte Eisner was a historian of Expressionist film, émigré Jew, and friend of F.W. Murnau and Fritz Lang, as well as a mother-figure for young German filmmakers of the 1960s and 70s (Elsaesser 215).

Wehrmacht. Anna is born during the war and while mother and daughter struggle to survive, they develop a close relationship with one another. After the return of the father in the postwar years, the parents are unable to rekindle their love and Anna's postwar childhood is overshadowed by her mother's depression and her father's abuse. Anna also plays the narrator commenting on her childhood and parental relationships from an adult perspective. This constellation reveals various aspects of Anna's continuous struggle with the impact the war had on her parents, which results in the emotional inaccessibility of either parent after the war.

The struggle of the abandoned child in Sanders-Brahm's film culminates in a symbolic scene of archival footage portraying an interview of a young abandoned child in the rubble fields of early postwar Berlin in search for both of his parents, who have been missing for days. Using archival documentary footage and creating an intertextual reference to Borchert's *Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch…*, Sanders-Brahms conflates, as Anton Kaes notes, the individual, private case of Anna with the national level: "Sanders-Brahms dramatizes this dialectic between the public and the private spheres" (*From Hitler to Heimat* 154). Similar to the family situations described in *Väterliteratur*, which stand in close connection to the public student protests, *Germany, Pale Mother* addresses the private experience which, at the same time, stands for national experience, as the film's title indicates. Through Anna's concrete family situation, the film addresses on an abstract level a whole generation that felt abandoned after the war, and who felt abandoned by the politics of their nation when they came of age. Anna's case plays a synecdochic role for the prevailing theme of the postwar abandoned child (*Kriegskind*), which resonates with many German postwar family narratives.

Following the abstraction of the abandoned child motif form the private postwar family situation to West Germany's second generation as a whole, the motif of the abandoned child also applies to the professional level of the filmmakers associated with New German Cinema. National Socialism drove the German film fathers away, and the immediate postwar film industry was, as mentioned above, still strongly influenced by the spirit of Nazi filmmaking and thus rejected by filmmakers of the second generation. Instead, several directors of European art cinema, such as Jean-Luc Godard, Frederico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, and a number of Hollywood filmmakers, including Douglas Sirk and John Ford, served as role models for them. The frustration with the ongoing Nazi-taint of Germany's postwar culture led the rising generation of filmmakers, unlike in any other media industry, to cutting their ties with their German film "fathers,"[12] via the *Oberhausen Manifesto*.[13]

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Both German literature and German film of the late 1960s and 70s show attempts at coping with a conflict-laden parent-child relationship or a lack of a trustworthy guardian and role model. The experiences are often rooted in what has been perceived as a traumatizing childhood related to the war or postwar years and are transferred onto more metaphorical levels. In their metaphorical meaning, these experiences refer to a

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[12] The West German film industry of the 1950s and 60s, still influenced by former Nazi filmmakers.

[13] In 1962, a group of winners of international festivals, spearheaded by Alexander Kluge, took an independent stance away from the former industry. The twenty-six filmmakers drew up a manifesto (*Oberhausen Manifesto*) in which they outlined a program of requirements addressed to Ministry of the Interior (Elsaesser 21). One of the requirements was a new governmental funding system under the name of *Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film* (later referred to in English as Young German Film), which allowed for successful production of full length films (Elsaesser 22; Knight 14). One of them was Alexander Kluge's *Abschied von Gestern* (*Yesterday Girl*, 1966), which represents the Young German filmmakers' way of eschewing mainstream film conventions. Many of the Young German films disrupt the viewer's expectations of plotlines, soundtrack, and character development and therefore create a disjointed and estranged feeling in the spectator (Kaes, 20; Knight 14).

whole generation and its political strife with the German nation. I categorize the experiences under the literary motif of the abandoned child as a symptom of history and am interested in how these symptoms have developed since the unification and through the second decade of the 21st century.

The generational conflict between Germany's second generation and the war generation is part of a timeframe, in which West German postwar memory culture was officially referred to as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with, or, more literally, mastering the past). Since then German memory culture has undergone many changes, including a much-needed name change. Many scholars have identified the events that contributed to changes in German memory culture most of all within the context of Germany's unification and the events leading up to it. The motif of the abandoned child and its continuation in various forms after the *Wende* has received little scholarly attention. The motif of the abandoned child originated in a time when West Germany still tried to "master its past." Thus it is a motif that has a history of its own as it played a significant role throughout West German postwar memory culture. Due to its historical background, examining the motif of the abandoned child in German cultural texts from around the turn of the millennium renders far-reaching and comprehensive insight into contemporary German memory culture. Against the background of a generational shift, a nation grappling with a newly unified identity and a strongly accelerating globalization after the fall of eastern European communism, the motif of this era reflects, due to its West German postwar history, a unique interplay between contempoaray issues and the role Germany's past continues to play.

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For a better understanding of German cultural memory texts originating around the time of the unification and into the 21st century, I shall provide an overview of some of the cultural memory debates of that time and the events that triggered them. One of these events was the airing of the US-produced docudrama *Holocaust* in West Germany in 1979. Along with a growing number of American productions on German television in the late 1970s and early 1980s, docudrama made it into mainstream television with an unprecedented viewing rate (20 million) in West Germany. Congruent to its viewing rates the miniseries further spurred the debate of Germany's past, and, as Erin McGlothlin notes in her 2006 study *Second Generation Holocaust Literature: Legacies of Survival and Perpetration*, "introduced the term 'Holocaust' into everyday German usage, making it a watershed event in German postwar discourse about the genocide of the Jews" (146). Ernestine Schlant marks the impact of the docudrama also as a turn of perspective on the Holocaust: "In the novels written by Germans the concern is never with the Holocaust for its own sake; the emphasis lies on using the Holocaust to accuse the parent" while "[t]he fact that [*Holocaust*] was foreign-made and sentimentalized apparently removed inhibitions and allowed response to the "other's" story" (96). Thus the docudrama marked the beginning of an era when not only "personal memories […] were giving way to public memory, provided primarily by books, films, the media, museums, and the education system," as Stuart Parkes remarks, but stories from the victims' side became part of postwar German memory culture (*Writers and Politics in Germany 1945-2008* 165). Thus sources other than the family line provided access to the past, increasing interest in gathering knowledge about it and initiating public debates (165-66).

At the same time, the late 1970s and early 80s witnessed a political strengthening of the conservative party CDU (Christian Democratic Union) due to the so-called *Tendenzwende*, pushing toward "normalizing" Germany's postwar national identity.[14] Thus, while the Holocaust became a widely accepted public discourse, the 1980s witnessed intensified debates about West Germany's national identity, roughly forty years after the war. West Germany's return to "normalcy" in order to secure a powerful position among Western nations was the focus of the public debate between intellectuals from both sides of the political spectrum, the so-called *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Debate) in 1986. The first impulse for this discussion was Chancellor Helmut Kohl's invitation to U.S. President Ronald Reagan to visit the military cemetery at Bitburg as part of celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II. The Kohl administration viewed the visit as a gesture of reconciliation, signaling that German *Wehrmacht* soldiers should be commemorated in an equally honorable fashion as soldiers of the Allied forces. The public found out, however, that among the buried soldiers were about fifty former members of the *Waffen-SS*. Yet, Kohl, "[u]ndeterred by the difficulties over the visit, […] revealed his intention to obliterate the horrendous uniqueness of the Holocaust" (Schlant 190). After an international outcry against the Bitburg visit, several conservative scholars published articles in defense of the Kohl administration and relativized the Holocaust. In their articles, the conservative historians portray the Second World War and the Holocaust as a "comprehensible" consequence to the crimes

[14] The *Tendenzwende* initially referred to a number of writers shifting their former left-of-center position toward a more conservative one, criticizing Willy Brandt's foreign policy in communist Europe (Compare Stuart Parkes, *Writers and Politics in Germany 1945-2008*, 93). Later followed public attacks on West German leftist intellectuals blaming them for the ongoing terrorist attacks and kidnappings by the RAF culminating in the terrorism crisis in the Fall of 1977 with the killing of Hanns Martin Schleyer (Parkes 100-103). The criticism was extended onto the governing Social Democratic Party at that time under chancellor Helmut Schmidt who was particularly criticized by the conservatives for his handling of the kidnapping of Schleyer and his foreign policy decisions regarding the Cold War (Schlant 185)

committed by and the threat coming from the Soviet Union (Parkes 165-66). In an expansive public media correspondence, scholars from the liberal side of the political spectrum, such as Jürgen Habermas, responded to the conservative commentaries in defense of emphasizing German responsibility for the most horrific atrocities of human history.

As part of the agenda toward "normalizing" Germany's past, the Kohl administration also emphasized German wartime and postwar suffering as a means to achieve its political goals. For one of his preunification speeches held in December 1989, Helmut Kohl chose the ruins of Dresden's famous *Frauenkirche* as his background. The ruin of the church served Kohl as a reminder of German prewar urban beauty and Germanic Christian tradition as well as a reminder of allied aerial warfare and German war experience, as the church ruin was an important symbol for the terror of war in general and the air raid on Dresden in February 1944, and therefore German suffering in particular. The ruined façade of the church facilitated Kohl's political agenda to reach Germans from the East and the West, as well as a large international audience, and helped promote the idea of a well-deserved unification of the two countries.[15]

[15] The ruined church façade in the background enhances Kohl's address to the international community, with members such as France's president François Mitterand and Margaret Thatcher who were critical of the idea of unifying Germany. The setting allows him to refer to the past in a twofold way. Firstly, with the church ruin as a reminder of war, he uses an emotionally charged pledge of peace that seems aimed at affecting his international listeners and colleagues primarily: "And here before you today, I would like to expand this oath in declaring: German soil/ground will have to, always, generate peace – this is the goal of our unity." The bold oath of "German ground/soil" as the origin for eternal peace may have played a role in reducing international criticism (dw-world.de "Helmut Kohl – Kanzler der deutschen Einheit"). Secondly, Kohl engages the church ruin as a symbolism of loss and suffering of the German population and points out: "Here, in front of the Frauenkirche, the memorial for the victims of Dresden, I just laid a wreath – also in remembrance to the suffering and the dead of this wonderfully beautiful old German town." Kohl's ability to integrate the discourse around German suffering caused by Allied warfare into his pre-unification speech may have not only affected his countrymen but also his colleagues from the former allied nations. Against the backdrop of Great Britain's and the United States's own critical voices concerning the ethical issue of the bombardment of Dresden, Kohl's speech may have initiated a sense of

Corresponding to the controversial visit at Bitburg's *Wehrmacht* cemetrary and the rededication of Berlin's *Neue Wache* into an all-encompassing war memorial, commemorating victims of the Holocaust along with German victims of Wolrd War I and II, Kohl's speech suggests that the topic of German wartime suffering would no longer be excluded from the public discourse. Kohl's attempt at endorsing German wartime experience as part of the public memory discourse contributed, as Schmitz remarks, to "[t]he pluralization of memory in post-1990 Germany [which offered] the chance, for the first time, to represent German losses side by side with German resposnisibilities" (*A Nation of Victims?* 17). German suffering thus played a crucial part in Kohl's agenda of "normalizing" the past in order to promote a unified German national identity, and it has since been an integral part of German post-*Wende* postwar memory culture.

Moreover, Kohl reflects his agenda of normalizing Germany's position as a Western nation in the motivation of redeeming conflicts. At the end of his Dresden speech, Kohl takes advantage of the upcoming Christmas holiday as a powerful symbol for his idea of German unification, and concludes that Christmas is not only a celebration of peace but also a celebration of the family. Kohl describes how families come together at Christmas, filled with the joy of seeing each other again (mdr.de "Kohls schwierigste Rede"). Here, Kohl establishes an allegory of East and West Germany as the "German family" whose members finally, after a long time, on Christmas, get to see each other again. Kohl ends his speech with greetings to East and West Germans, wishing them a peaceful Christmas and a happy New Year in 1990 (mdr.de "Kohls schwierigste Rede"). As reconciliation is an important point on Kohl's agenda, it reaches from international

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responsibility and guilt for German suffering among the former allies, and thus a willingness to act politically in Kohl's favor.

reconciliation to German wartime suffering to reuniting East and West Germans down to the smallest social unit, the family. Given the context of the late 1960s and 70s, the reunited family as an allegory suggests not only redeeming family members separated by the inner German border but also suggests the settling of generational conflicts that have stricken West Germany in the previous decade.

Kohl's speech in front of Dresden's *Frauenkirche* illustrates the chancellor's introduction of German suffering into official post-*Wende* postwar German memory discourse. This development is particularly important in regard to examining the motif of the abandoned child in German memory starting with the *Wende*, considering the motif's ambivalence as victim within the perpetrator culture. This project examines through the motif of the abandoned child the impact caused by the surge toward unity and normalization. It seeks answers to questions whether attempts at making amends and promoting unity have redeemed feelings of abandonment or whether the possible resistance toward unity or political changes such as the abrogation of East Germany might have revealed new situations of rupture and abandonment.

However, while the political agenda toward unity resulted in the unification of the two German nations, the debates did not end. Quite to the contrary, as Helmut Schmitz describes in *A Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present* (2007),

> It is not only that the Third Reich is the last moment of shared history between the two partial German states, in both the Federal Republic and the GDR memory of the Nazi past was tied up with both national and Cold War commemorative politics….After 1990, the memory of Nazism returned to the cultural sphere with unprecedented force. (3)

Schmitz argues that this resurgence of cultural memory at the time of reconfiguring a

German national identity led to two diverging modes of commemoration in the newly unified country: a highly institutionalized and ritualized memory culture surrounding German responsibility, and private communicative memory of personal accounts of German wartime suffering (4). At the center of the diverging memory culture, disputes arose over the national memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin (*Mahnmaldebatte*), Daniel Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners,* Martin Walser's acceptance speech for the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 1998 followed by the *Walser-Bubis Debatte*, as well as the traveling exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944*, "[exposing] the rift between official public memory of the Nazi past and private or family memory" (4-5). Due to its dual background as child victim of the war on one hand and as denouncer of the Nazi parents on the other hand, the abandoned child motif is situated right between the two sides that Schmitz describes. In German texts dealing with the questions concerned with these debates, the abandoned child motif serves as a microlevel indicator as to how the text balances its perspective regarding these questions.

While the decade after the unification saw a rise in conflicting perspectives in the public debates, some scholars observed a change toward productive dialogue between opposing sides. Stuart Taberner and Karina Berger argue in the introduction to *German as Victims in the Literary Fiction of the Berlin Republic* that the debates have created a space from which a discourse has emerged that "acknowledges both the complexity and fundamental unknowability of the past – of the individual's subjective perception of his or her 'objective' reality – and the consequent, and perhaps even productive, tension between judgement and empathy" (3). Rather than forming rigid camps of viewpoints in

these debates, an open-mindedness toward plurality within the discourse has developed. Christine Anton likewise emphasizes in her aforementioned introduction that Germany's past in post-*Wende* memory culture

> [has] undergone re-analyses from new angles. New generations of writers and filmmakers are pushing at the boundaries of cultural taboos and political correctness and probe the complex collective consciousness with a view to ascertaining what constitutes the German nation today. They are challenging the status quo of the German "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" and seek to find new ways to make certain that Auschwitz will remain a "deeply felt obligation," but also no longer perceive "Auschwitz as a hindrance to achieve normalcy." (15-16)

Thus in its complexity and plurality post-*Wende* German memory culture seeks the status of normalcy.

However, as normalcy is the goal of German politics of national identity, incidents show that Germany continues to attract national and international attention in association with its horrific past. As Bill Niven proposes in his 2002 study *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich*, "[i]f Germans feel they can criticize forms of memories or even the Jews without being accused of anti-Semitism, and if Jews can criticize Germans without fear of giving rise to anti-Semitism, then 'normal' dialogue will be possible" (192). Yet, while one might question criticism based on general categories such as "Jewish" or "German" —regardless of the Holocaust—, 21st-century events show that political situations still become overshadowed by the past, making "normal" dialogue a goal yet to be attained. In his political prose poem *Was gesagt werden muss* published in the German daily newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in 2012, Günter Grass claims to be breaking a long-lasting German taboo of criticizing Israeli foreign politics, specifically Israel's nuclear armament and its potential deployment against Iran. Grass concludes with the undifferentiated claim that Israel is a

threat to world peace (Süddeutsche Zeitung online). The poem initiated an international furor, in which the inappropriateness of Grass's poem was debated. Grass's publication culminated in a travel ban by the Israeli government against him, proving "normalcy" not yet achieved.

However, the public debate revolving around Grass's poem exemplifies German memory culture: while increasing in differentiation, it remains ambiguous. While Grass's poem receives support from the radical left and right, scholarly and moderate public voices view the poem critically yet in a highly discerning way. While some call the poem anti-Semitic, the majority of criticism is directed at its undifferentiated and monolithic tone. Stuart Taberner describes Grass's posture as public intellectual expressed in the poem as obsolete as "[h]e may now truly be the 'Alte', 'Dinosaurier' or 'letzter Mohikaner' that he styles himself as, and in a fashion that is most likely experienced by an ever more digitally-literate and diverse public as merely irritating rather than productively challenging" ('Was gesagt werden muss' 530). Taberner's analysis of Grass's poem illustrates the changes that have happened in German memory culture since the 1960 and 70s when Grass used to be a major voice in West Germany's postwar memory discourse: It is in itself much too diverse and differentiated to still accept monolithic statements such as Grass's poem.

The still relevant connection of Germany's past and the nation's situation today, which Grass's 2012 publication revealed, is fundamental to my analysis of the literary motif of the abandoned child in German literature and film after the *Wende*. The motif reflects the change toward plurality, complexity, and differentiation as it signals a literary deposition of identity, social constellation and historical context. Thus, the motif reveals

a significant change from being a tool for expressing rather judgmental, self-serving, and often binary viewpoints as in *Väterliteratur*. Aside from representing an outdated flare-up of monolithic perspectives on German memory culture, Grass's poem indicates the increasing influence of global conflicts on post-*Wende* Germany in general and German contemporary memory culture in particular. Thus, contemporary global and local developments may involve decentralizing the motif of the abandoned child from its World War II context toward an increased diversity of situations causing childhood abandonment. The increased responsibility toward the well-being of children in contemporary childhood culture makes the image of the abandoned child a particularly powerful cultural indicator of responsibility and commitment. The motif lends itself to exploring questions regarding what Germans see as their moral commitment and responsibilities and whom they see as victims within the context of contemporary German (memory) culture.[16]

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German post-*Wende* fiction has reflected the development of contemporary German memory culture in great quantity, and a large array of literary scholarship exists accordingly. In order to situate this project's contribution to the literary scholarship of post-*Wende* and postwar German memory culture, I shall provide a brief summary of previous findings. German fiction dealing with the Nazi past before the *Wende* focused

[16] Childhood studies emerged as its own discipline during this decade and academic programs dedicated to children as an independent social group emerged at Brooklyn College in 1991. Furthermore the UN Conventions of Children's Rights, signed in 1989 and effective in 1990, additionally expresses a global trend in increased cultural focus on childhood (Mayall 5). Kate Douglas mentions in her groundbreaking 2010 study *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma, and Memory* how childhood experiences -- often challenging -- started to soar in cultural texts of the early 1990 (2). Moreover, Douglas not only describes the increase of childhood experience in Western cultural texts and thus the increased investment in childhood but also the growth of complexity of the concept of childhood as cultural construct. She goes so far as to say childhood depiction in cultural text and history stands in a synecdochic relationship with the past (9).

largely on the German experience of witnessing and its way in which the witnessing has been conveyed or not. (Susanne Vees-Gulani and Laurel Cohen-Pfister *Generational Shifts in Contemporary German Culture* 6). Therefore West German postwar writing before the 1980s shows two general characteristics: Firstly, it is largely directed at the democratic future of the country, and thus the Holocaust itself plays a minor role. As historical witnesses, often returnees from exile, these writers are "ever-conscious of this history" and thus "informed by a politically committed humanist ethics" (*Cambridge History of German Literature* 442). Secondly, the German witnessing and the silencing thereof rendered a focus on the family line as connection to World War II, often emphasizing the male perspective (Vees-Gulani and Cohen-Pfister 7).

The 1980s and 90s changed this picture: "German society turned toward the Nazi and Holocaust past as never before," Erin McGlothlin writes in her book *Second Generation Holocaust Literature: Legacies of Survival and Perpetration* (200). By quoting Bill Niven, McGlothlin states that

> [t]he various debates and events [of the 1980s and 90s]…reflected a willingness on the part of the German public both to confront more directly German crimes during the Holocaust and at the same time to move beyond an obsession with the perpetrators to consider their victims as well. (201)

While the suffering of victims of Germans finally receive attention so do German victims. Karina Berger and Stuart Taberner explain in their aforementioned introduction to *German as Victims in the Literary Fiction of the Berlin Republic* that,

> [o]ne of the truly novel aspects of the changed manner in which the Nazi past is discussed in today's Germany is the integration of narratives of German wartime suffering…the bombing, mass rape and expulsion endured by millions of Germans during the closing phase of the war are now very much part of public discourse. Yet, in contrast with previous periods, it is widely acknowledged that representations of such horrors are not per se "revisionist" but rather, in the main, an invitation to reflect on the sequencing of the "German" experience: Germans

> as aggressors, Germans as perpetrators…, Germans as victims of the furious response provoked by their aggression, Germans as members of a vanquished nation. (4)

Berger and Taberner illustrate how the former dichotomy of victims and perpetrators undergo much more differentiated scrutiny in the literary work after the *Wende*, and thus fall in line with a general tendency toward increased complexity and diversity within contemporary German memory culture.

Studies focused on generational shifts provide one explanation for the growth of diversity and broader bandwidth of perspectives in a society's memory culture. Situated in the field of trauma studies, Marianne Hirsch's work emphasizes the second generation's memory of their parents' trauma and revolves around the term *postmemory*, which Hirsch created:

> The term "postmemory" is meant to convey its temporal and qualitative difference from survivor memory, its secondary or second generation memory quality, its basis in displacement, its vicariousness and belatedness. Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through representation, projection and creation. (*Surviving Images* 9)

Due to the belatedness, the succeeding generation's dealing with their inherited memory is *about* memory and requires the application of imagination in the attempt to make up for the belatedness. McGlothlin responds to postmemory in the context of her study of second-generation Jewish and German writers that "[s]econd-generation literature thus becomes the arena in which the creative imagining, the rupture and repair of the Holocaust past take place, the garment that the writer simultaneously rends and mends" (12). Thus the fictionalization of the work of the succeeding generation, and therefore the source for creating new perspectives, is paramount to the memory culture of a society in a postconflict era.

In Germany's current situation, the second generation and their production of cultural texts has been joined by the third generation, which involves generational change as well as increased temporal distance. Vees-Gulani and Cohen-Pfister point out in 2010 that "[m]ore than sixty years after the end of the Second World War, fifty since the first waves of immigration, forty since the student movement, and twenty since the fall of the Wall, time alone guarantees new generations who look back on these events with distance" (1). The distance has even increased since then, allowing for the emergence of voices of the fourth postwar generation in recent years and thus an even more diverse spectrum of perspectives.

In one of his introductions to *German literature after 1990*, Stuart Taberner underlines "[d]iversity [as] one of the defining characteristics of contemporary German-language literature," which requires a "more subtle, more differentiated, and certainly more cautious" reading. Today's literary scholar is challenged, according to Taberner, to

> fully [grasp]…the complex interaction between these "structures of feeling" and a much wider range of authors as they inflect discourses of self, identity and "posture" within local contexts and in relation to the broader transformation of the world in an age defined by globalization, religious and ethnic confrontation, and astonishing shifts in social, political and economic power. (*The Novel in German since 1990* 4-5)

The broader transformation of the world as Taberner describes it and the generational distance make up Germany's cultural memory profile today. German literature of today negotiates this interplay of generational shifts and transformation of the world often against the backdrop of the paramount rifts and ruptures created in the 20th century.

Generational shifts and world transformation also play an important role in Friederike Eigler's study *Gedächtnis und Geschichte* in which she explores narratives of the past written from vicarious perspectives in contemporary German multigeneration

novels. Eigler examins

> auf welche Weise Generationsromane die Erbschaft des Nationalsozialismus, DDR-Sozialismus und der west-deutschen Protestbewegung der 68-Generation literarisch gestalten und kommentieren...Anhand der literarischen Darstellung von Generationsverhältnissen—dieser Nahtstelle zwischen individueller und kollektiver Geschichte—lassen sich Brüche und Leerstellen in den Erinnerungsdiskursen, aber auch deren Identifikationangebote und Sinnentwürfe darstellen. (10-11)
>
> (the ways in which generational novels represent and comment on the historical inheritance of National Socialism, East German communism, and the West German student movement of the 68er generation…The literary representation of generational relationships—the interface between individual and collective history—faciliates the retracing of not only ruptures and gaps within memory discourses, but of also the emergence of various ways to identify with and of making sense of the past. [translation mine])

Eigler illustrates how narrative strategies in the analyzed novels meander between the family legacy and contemporary cultural memory discourses and reveal creative "Erinnerungspraktiken and Vergangenheitsentwürfe" (methods of commemorating and conceptions of the past) at the turn of the millennium.

"Vergangenheitsentwürfe" (conceptions of the past) also play a significant role in Debbie Pinfold's aforementioned study. Pinfold examines the child's perspective on the Third Reich as a literary device in postwar German literature. Pinfold suggests that the child perspective serves as a "plausible outsider figure" for modern authors since "while [the child] is still being socialized it may be considered as existing on the margins of adult society…. Using the child's viewpoint is a particularly effective defamiliarizing device, for a child has not had time to be jaded by the process of habitualization" (4). Given the premise of examining a literary device rather than a psychologically plausible child figure and given the historical event that contextualizes the figure, Pinfold finds that the child perspective in German postwar literature is not clear-cut but often represents

ambivalent and complex images of that time (5-6).

Like Eigler and Pinfold I am interested in perspectives of Germany's past. As in Eigler's study, multigenerational constructs play an important role in the texts I analyze. Yet the focus on the abandoned child allows me to break away from the generational construct. The abandoned child motif lets this analysis consider situations that may not be related to the past, representing other current social issues and thus representing new ways of identification within contemporary German memory culture. Thus the motif I analyze reflects generational narratives but also other contemporary cultural and socio-political issues such as immigration that resonate with the past but are not necessarily situated within the context of generation and family-line.

Debbie Pinfold's study and mine have the child's perspective in common. However, while Pinfold's work focuses on German literature from the 1950s through the mid-1990s, my study picks up on the unification as a major transformative event reflected in perspectives on the past in succeeding literature. Moreover, my analysis follows the aspect of abandonment, which includes considering the victim-status as well as the "legacy" of the motif origination in the early postwar years as described in Böll's texts and *Väterliteratur*. Finally, while I analyze the abandoned child in contemporary German texts that deal with the past, it is not necessarily the child's view on the Third Reich, as is the parameter of Pinfolds analysis, but instead includes the conception and portrayal of the child as a symptom of history and politics.

This dissertation examines the motif of the abandoned child in texts of the three post-*Wende* decades. The motif allows a perspective on the past that deviates from the generational pattern and the family line, and thus permits us to look at constellations that

may be deemed more appropriate to reflect German memory culture in the new millennium. The abandoned child motif allows us to consider Germany's cultural status in regard to responsibility and victimhood against the backdrop of World War II and the Holocaust, the country's unification, as well as contemporary national and global events and their social challenges.

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The texts of this project depicting the abandoned child motif are organized chronologically and thematically into three chapters. Chapter 2, "Beyond the Second Generation: The Abandoned Child in Texts by Wenders, Treichel, and Sebald," deals with a group of texts closest to the event of Germany's unification. In Wim Wenders's film *Der Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire* 1987) (hereafter abbreviated as *Der Himmel*), Ulrich Treichel's *Der Verlorene* (*Lost* 1999), and W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001) (*Austerlitz* 2003) the abandoned child motif represents the main protagonist's and the German second generation's perspective. In these texts childhood abandonment is informed by experiences of the war or immediate postwar years as well as a generational conflict with the parents' generation. All of the texts show a desire to depart from the binary parameters of postwar West German memory culture in general and of the generational conflict in particular.

While they share the same desire for departure, the motif of the abandoned child in these texts reveals different ways of expressing it. The earliest texts, Wenders's film *Der Himmel* predates Germany's unification by a couple of years. The abandoned child motif plays a symbolic role in the film, representing West Germany's second generation as a *pars pro toto* of the nation as a whole and its postwar struggles. The film deals with

phantasmagorical themes of change, coming together, and a new beginning. Corresponding to these themes, the narrative offers gestures of reconciliation toward Germany's main group of victims, the Jews, suggesting a rather one-sided and self-serving solution to Germany's postwar melancholia.

The abandoned child in Treichel's *Der Verlorene* is situated within the setting of the West German postwar family of the 1950s. In many ways, this setting resembles the social dynamic represented in *Väterliteratur*. However, Treichel's text acknowledges and discusses German wartime suffering, thus adding another element to the familial conflict. The consideration of the parents' suffering diffuses the intergenerational frontiers along the victim-perpetrator binary. The German second generation abandoned child in Sebald's *Austerlitz* deflects his postwar struggles by focusing on the story of a Jewish Holocaust survivor, who mirrors, however, the German postwar abandoned child just as much as the Holocaust. The texts discussed in Chapter 2 show only limited success at breaking away from the binary dynamic of the generational conflict dominating the self-referential perspective of the second generation. They are still overshadowed by events experienced during the war or in the immediate postwar years, by the bipolar pattern of the parental conflict and its focus on the male voice.

In several ways, the set of texts in Chapter 3, "Third Generation Perspective and Female Voices: The Abandoned Child in German Novels of the 2000s," might be read as a counterpart to the texts of Chapter 2. The antithetical relationship between the two chapters is mostly based on the generational shift between the authors discussed in each chapters. Moreover, the texts of Chapter 3 show a significant increase in female voices. The abandoned child is contextualized within these shifts and thus reflects an altered

outlook on the past. Related to the generational shift from the second to the third generation (the so-called *Enkelgeneration* [grandchildren's generation]), the abandoned child motif in the texts of Chapter 3 shows an increase of generational perspectives on the past. Childhood abandonment is less dominated by the binary structure of the parent-child relationship and not only represented by one character. Instead multiple characters often show aspects of childhood abandonment which have various causes. While the Holocaust and World War II is still central in the texts of Chapter 3, childhood abandonment is no longer only a symptom of this event but includes other causes as well. In Katharina Hacker's 2006 novel *Die Habenichtse* (*The Have-Nots*, 2008), the abandoned child motif reveals insight into how the German past affects the life of a well-to-do young German couple, and shows how their prosperous life has played a role in repressing the burden of the past. While the abandoned child motif in Jenny Erpenbeck's 2007 novel *Heimsuchung* (*Visitations*, 2009) illustrates the disruptions caused by political changes and atrocities throughout the 20th century, it reveals an East German perspective. Yet, here also, the abandoned child motif alludes to unresolved burden of the past, which entails aspects of East German memory culture. While also depicting the chain of disruptive events of 20th century German history, the abandoned child motif in Julia Franck's 2007 novel *Die Mittagsfrau* (*The Blind Side of the Heart*, 2009) serves as a means of explaining the breaches that happened due to the disruptions. In all three novels, the situation of abandonment is interwoven into a larger historical network of causes and effects. Furthermore, in most of the texts the time window to the past has become larger, often including prewar history in their development of narrative. However, while the perspectives on the past increase and the time frame these novels cover goes beyond

World War II, the familial lineage to World War II or the Holocaust is still important in all three texts.

Despite the familial link from the present to the past, the novels represent a heterogeneous group of related and unrelated characters and thus include a larger spectrum of different voices. Aside from the strong female voice, the abandoned child motif in the texts of Chapter 3 reveals Jewish and former East German perspectives as well. More so than the texts of Chapter 2, the novels of the second chapter disrupt former dualities of gender, Germans and Jews, and victim and perpetrators, generating dual, thus hybrid identities. As the novels' perspective is less restricted to binaries, their approach to the Holocaust and World War II is more nuanced. However, while on one hand showing a freer approach to the past, the abandoned child motif in these texts shows nonetheless the burden of the past passed on to the third generation.

The texts of Chapter 4 continue to embed the abandoned child motif in a more nuanced approach to the past. Wolfgang Herrndorf's *Tschick* (2010) (*Why We Took the Car* 2014), Ursula Krechel's *Landgericht* (2012), and Per Leo's *Flut und Boden* (2014) and *Der Wille zum Wesen* (2014) show in "Historicizing, Continuities, and a New Generation's Perspective in the 2010s: Abandonment in texts by Wolfgang Herrndorf, Ursula Krechel, and Per Leo," even more increase in the diversity of childhood abandonment's causes and continue to represent hybrid voices. Childhood abandonment in Herrndorf's coming-of-age novel *Tschick* is situated in a multicultural setting in 21st-century Germany, showing contemporary issues, some of which have roots in the past beyond World War II and the Holocaust. While *Tschick* pays less attention to the Holocaust and World War II, *Landgericht* depicts a situation of abandonment in a

German-Jewish family during the time of the Holocaust and West Germany's postwar years. However, the parents in Krechel's text suffer more from abandonment than the children, reflecting reconsidering the second generation's perspective. Leo's texts, *Flut und Boden* and *Der Wille zum Wesen*, also focus on World War II and the Holocaust, yet, while *Flut und Boden* portrays abandoned children, the abandoned child motif in *Der Wille zum Wesen* plays an abstract role. Read as corresponding texts, *Flut und Boden* and *Der Wille zum Wesen* show an abandoned child motif, which illustrates a German tradition of thinking that contributed to Nazi ideology and Third-Reich racism.

The abandoned child motif in the texts of Chapter 4 no longer outlines a generational pattern, and neither is World War II or the Holocaust a common focus of abandonment. While the novels of Chapter 3 all reveal in various ways the third-generation perspective or autobiographical ties to the past, the generational perspective and autobiographical aspects of the writers discussed in Chapter 4 play a less important role in the portrayal of the abandoned child. Even more than in the texts of Chapter 3, the abandoned child motif in the texts of the third chapter shows an increased distance and further detachment from World War II and the Holocaust. In all three texts, the abandoned child motif is part of portraying a large historical framework, often based on thorough archival and academic research, reflecting on German-specific historical continuities which still show relevance in 21st-century Germany. Thus, while the texts of Chapter 3 show a more nuanced approach to the past, the abandoned child motif in Herrndorf's, Krechel's and Leo's texts demonstrate a refined outlook on the past, which portrays World War II and the Holocaust more like a historical topic rather than familial or generational memory culture. The abandoned child motif in these texts reflects upon

Germany after twenty-five years of unification and indicates that the country entered a new era, in which more general questions arise. While less oriented toward family and generational issues, these questions pertain to Germany as a country, its contemporary position as a strong political and economic power and to being a country of immigration, while considering both, the contemporary global context and Germany's yet problematic past.

CHAPTER 2

BEYOND THE SECOND GENERATION: THE ABANDONED CHILD IN TEXTS BY WENDERS, TREICHEL, AND SEBALD

Describing his childhood relationship with his father and the father's role in the family, second generation author Christoph Meckel writes the following description of his childhood in *Suchbild: Über meinen Vater* (1980),

> Die große, umfassende Freude war nicht da. Sie fehlte an allen Tagen, in allen Nächten, bei allen Gelegenheiten, zu jeder Zeit .... Es fehlte das unbelastete Atmen und Träumen, es fehlte die unbedachte Zärtlichkeit .... Der begeisternde Anlass. Es fehlten die unbedenklichen Wörter und die schwerelosen Unterhaltungen, es fehlten Lässigkeit, Langmut und Frivolität. Es fehlte ein Vorschuß an Sympathie für den Vater, ein laisser faire für die Schwächen seiner Kinder, es fehlte das grenzenlose Verzeihen und also die Liebe. (97)
>
> (General, all-embracing joy was not there. It was missing on any day, any night, in all situations, at any time … There was no unencumbered breathing, and there were no dreams, no spontaneous affection or enthusiastic moments. There was a lack of carefree words and jovial conversations, of nonchalance, patience, and triviality. The love for the father was not a matter of course, and he lacked a laisser-faire attitude toward his children's idiosyncrasies; unconditional forgiveness, therefore simply love, was missing [translation mine).

Meckel's image of a postwar childhood deficient in emotional care is primarily focused on the nuclear family and on the father's inadequate methods of childrearing. As the *Der Spiegel* quote on the verso of Meckel's *Suchbild* states, "Meckel beschreibt freilich kein exotisches

Ungeheuer, sondern den Druchschnittstyp einer Generation und einer Klasse“ (Meckel surely doesn’t describe an exotic monster, but the average persona of a specific generation and of a certain social class [translation mine]) whose lack of empathy in their childrearing methods is—in their literary description—usually placed in relationship to their involvement in fascist Germany. As generic as the father in Meckel’s character description is, Meckel’s text as a genre example of West German *Väterliteratur* during the late 1970s and 1980s is “marked by a preoccupation with Germany’s fascist past … [and] explore[s] thematically the legacy of the Nazi past on the most intimate level of transmission – that of the postwar family” (McGlothlin 145). The biographical tie to the war, the postwar family setting, and the parent-child conflict of *Väterliteratur* dominate the perspective on the past, whereas the parent-child conflict is anchored in the child’s feeling of abandonment due to the parent’s lack of attention and love.

Following the time period of *Väterliteratur* and originating against the backdrop of the political development surrounding Germany’s unification, the three texts discussed in this chapter have in common a decisive impulse to break away from the German postwar family-based desolation. Wim Wenders’ 1987 film *Der Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*), Hans-Ulrich Treichel’s 1998 novel *Der Verlorene* (*Lost*, 1999), and W.G Sebald’s last novel *Austerlitz* of 2001 (*Austerlitz* 2003), in various ways, tie into the issues of the (German) postwar family—particularly the situation of childhood abandonment—and suggest means of transforming these issues. Similar to the thematic parameters of *Väterliteratur*, the topic of childhood abandonment in the three texts is imbedded in the biographical experience of war or the immediate postwar years; the texts’ thematic focus is set on the war-affected family or generation. Thus the abandoned child is the postwar child. Moreover, the authors of the three

texts, born between 1943 and 1952, belong to roughly the same age-cohort as the writers associated with *Väterliteratur* and belong to the so-called German second generation. However, all three texts reveal in their depiction of the abandoned child of the postwar family a distinct moment of departure from the previously described features of the West German postwar child. While some protagonists seek conciliatory fantasies to overcome the past and issues of childhood abandonment, others attempt a new approach of considering and acknowledging multiple factors that may have led to the abandonment, such as the parents' own difficult situation.

Wim Wenders' *Der Himmel über Berlin* (hereafter abbreviated as *Der Himmel*) originated during the transitional period between West Germany's political change toward conservativism in the beginning of the 1980s and the country's unification. The film places the (West) German postwar abandoned child on a metaphorical level, representing not only the German second generation but the divided nation in general. Wenders resolves abandonment in a conciliatory fantasy, reflecting preunification desires for normalization and unity.

Contrary to Wenders' film, Treichel's *Der Verlorene* and Sebald's *Austerlitz*, having originated roughly a decade after unification, reflect a much more ambivalent position in their departure from the postwar family situation. While both texts show a distinct detachment from the way the postwar abandoned child has been portrayed in *Väterliteratur*, the experience of abandonment is described as lingering, albeit in altered form.

While situated within the circumstances of the immediate postwar nuclear family, *Der Verlorene* reveals a more nuanced picture of the postwar social dynamics than texts associated with *Väterliteratur*. The abandoned child, who is the text's narrator, reflects a

higher degree of emotional distance to his neglect as revealed in his ironic depiction of his family situation. At the same time the text considers the parents' own traumatic war experience while not downplaying German responsibility. The text's point of departure from the postwar childhood abandonment lies thus in letting go of the rigid judgement of the parents through the notion of accepting the past as a complex and irresolvable—yet shifting—issue, which nevertheless continues to accompany one's life in one way or another. Treichel's later texts further support the ever changing role of the past by repeating similar themes from a succeeding generational viewpoint.

Rather than a text by a member of the German second generation reflecting on his postwar family life, Sebald's novel moves the focus of childhood abandonment onto the experience of a Jewish Holocaust survivor who reflects on his traumatic experience of abandonment in conversations with his German friend, the novel's narrator. In the wake of the opening of the Eastern European borders Sebald boldly creates the situation of a German-Jewish friendship which intermingles Jewish victim legacy with German responsibility in a problematic way. While revealing the far-reaching consequences of abandonment of the Jewish child victim, Sebald's empathetic engagement with the Jewish victim legacy repeatedly points to his, or his narrator's, own postwar experiences.

The three texts discussed in this chapter reflect different stages of the political change associated with the *Wende*. Although released before the fall of the Wall, even prior to the East German rise, *Der Himmel* captures high hopes likely to be evoked by the political stirring in the Soviet Union after Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika and Glasnost reforms, as well as by the agenda of the Kohl administration for a stronger national identity. The film reflects the utopian desire for an end of a perceived German postwar melancholy, or even

torment; a condition, I argue, that is closely connected to the experience of the abandoned postwar child and which Wenders' film transfers onto a national, preunification stage.

Separated from *Der Himmel* by the event of the *Wende*, *Der Verlorene* and *Austerlitz* must be read within the post-*Wende* context and its various debates. As Konrad Jarausch, Hinrich Seeba, and David Conradt phrase it in their book chapter *The Presence of the Past: Culture, Opinion, and Identity in German*: "With the fall of the Wall, history returned with a vengeance…unification in effect doubled the burden of the past...[and] [s]ince the shadows of the past could hardly be exorcised in general, [its] reconsideration surfaced in several specific debates" (*After Unity* 47-48). Rather than univocal reconciliation with the difficult past, the unification, with its demand for reconfiguring German national identity, led to a multiplication of perspectives of the past. In *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990* (2006), Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove describe post-*Wende* German memory culture as an expanding "gendered and generational memory map," encompassing controversial debates revolving around German war atrocities, Germany's victims, the longing for normalcy, and German war experience (2). The motif of the abandoned child in Treichel's and Sebald's texts faces the challenge of finding its place within the heterogeneous topography of this map. Thus, in their portrayal of the motif, these texts reflect the direct or indirect negotiation of these memory debates, rendering it a complex junction of memory discourse.

While the abandoned postwar child in Treichel's text is heavily backlit by the parents' own traumatic experience of expulsion and loss, the responsibility of the parents' generation is not dismissed. Helmut Schmitz argues in *A Nation of Victims? Representation of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, "the cultural hegemony of the liberal

left after 1968 resulted in a broad scale de-legitimization of empathy for and articulation of the German experience of suffering, creating a rigid classification of perpetrators and victims that excluded ambivalences" (11). Treichel's inclusion of German suffering in the heretofore rigidly judged image of the postwar family while simultaneously incorporating the issue of German responsibility is not only evidence of re-evaluating the "student movement and its role within the commemorative culture of the federal Republic," but also reflective of a broadening understanding towards the past (Schmitz 11).

Also Sebald's *Austerlitz* reflects the post-*Wende* plurification of the understanding of the past. Sebald is one of the first ones among non-Jewish German writers who focuses on the Jewish victim perspective. However, when read against the backdrop of Sebald's previous publication, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (*On the Natural History of Destruction*), a text based on his 1997 lecture on the effect of allied aerial warfare, the negotiation and reflection of German responsibility and suffering, even the German experience of abandonment, play an important role in *Austerlitz*. The narrator, simultaneously friend of and counterpart to the Jewish victim, is a reference to the German experience discussed in the novel and other important works by Sebald. While the juxtaposition of the Jewish victim and the second generation German narrator on one hand attest for the above-mentioned broadening of understanding toward the past, the close proximity of the two characters is nonetheless fraught with tension. Stuart Taberner and Karina Berger discuss the broadening understanding in *German as Victims in the Literary Fiction of the Berlin Republic* and rightly state that it "needs to be set within an ethical framework that wards against the risks of relativization and revisionism" (Taberner and Berger 4). While showing, on one hand, comprehensive awareness for that ethical framework, on the other hand Sebald, possibly due

to his own unsettling and unresolved experience with the impact of World War II, comes close to pushing this framework's boundaries.

All three texts (*Der Himmel*, *Der Verlorene*, and *Austerlitz*) portray the motif of the postwar abandoned child within the context of social and political change. Whereas in Wenders' *Der Himmel* this change is merely an imagined one and thus serves only the protagonist's fantasies and desires, Treichel's *Der Verlorene* and Sebald's *Austerlitz* reflect the social implications of the change having happened. The two latter texts reveal the challenges of the increased heterogeneity of the post-Wall memory culture as the abandoned child motif in these texts negotiates several perspectives of the post-*Wende* memory culture, such as the discussion of German suffering as well as exploring experiences of Germany's victims. Yet all three texts reflect the authors' own historical entrenchment in and dependence on the perception of abandonment as second-generation Germans.

Wim Wenders' *Der Himmel über Berlin*

Wim Wenders, born in 1945, is commonly associated with the group of postwar West German filmmakers known as New German Cinema. Wenders started his filmmaking career in the late 1960s and founded, with several other contemporary filmmakers, the independent film distribution company *Filmverlag der Autoren* in 1971. Generally, this group of young filmmakers are associated with the German second generation's generational conflict with their parents, the war generation. More specifically, this group's attempt was to establish a culture of German art film after the war, a genre which had been greatly tainted and disrupted by Nazi politics, and therefore was lacking adequate role models in the parents' generation of German filmmakers. Thus Wenders' oeuvre needs to be placed within this situation of

cultural abandonment.

Like his filmmaking colleagues, Wenders grew suspicious of traditional German culture in his adolescent years due to its relationship with fascism (Roger Cook and Gerd Gemünden *The Cinema of Wim Wenders* 11). Under American occupation, American pop culture became prevalent in Germany and offered a popular alternative to German culture. Several American directors served as *ersatz* fathers in Wenders's professional life (11). In 1977, following an invitation by Francis Ford Coppola to collaborate on a production which was later released as *Hammett* (1982), Wenders moved to the United States. He returned to Germany in the early 1980s upon which he started working on *Der Himmel über Berlin*.

Der Himmel reflects the desire for change which conflates aspects of the German second generation's experience of postwar abandonment and parent-child conflicts with national themes. The change is portrayed as a form of redemption through unity with another person, which offers reconciliation with the past as well as a promising future. The metaphorical quality of this change allows applying these aspects to the state of the (two) German nations. On one hand, redeeming postwar uneasiness of West German second generation cultural production and the notion of finding closure to the difficult past makes the film a problematic political statement. On the other hand, the film's idea of overcoming the state of separation and abandonment expresses the desire to transform the idea of West German postwar suffering and represents a transition to different ways of coping with the past.

The protagonist who represents the change is an angel named Damiel dwelling in the skies above Berlin in a timeless, isolated, melancholic black and white world from which he witnesses history and human life but painfully lacks the ability to interact with humans.

Archival footage of bombed urban landscapes and child victims of war underline the angel's witnessing of history and their timeless existence. Only children, who are strongly represented in the cast, are able to see the angels. Damiel yearns to leave the world of the angels behind and dreams about human life and its sensual stimulation. He falls in love with a French circus artiste named Marion. He finally leaves behind his fellow angel, Cassiel, to give up his angelic state of being. His transformation happens by crossing the line of the Berlin Wall in a still-divided city scarred by its history. Damiel's transition to human is accompanied by a poem about childhood and the first people with whom he interacts are children, drawing a significant connection between Damiel's role and the child.

Without his omniscience, it takes Damiel time to find Marion. He wanders the city until he finds her. The union is poetically underlined by close-ups and strong colors and sets a stark contrast to the black and white outlook of the angels and the dismal city life around Damiel and Marion. The main plot is accompanied by side stories, such as the US-American film production happening at a former air protection bunker in the center of the city. The film being shot there is a detective story situated in the early postwar years. The lead in the American film is Peter Falk, playing himself in the diegesis of *Der Himmel über Berlin*. Damiel has his first adult human interaction with Falk in the form of an appeasing handshake. Falk plays some sort of mentor role in Damiel's transformation to human since Falk himself is portrayed as having been an angel. A third figure who receives recurring attention while he wanders around the urban landscape is Homer, an old man and long-time Berlin resident who calls himself a storyteller and who is mostly depicted reflecting on the past and being on the search for the epic of peace. Yet, in the end, all side stories and surrounding figures lose their significance. Only the focus on Damiel and Marion's union

remains.

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Wenders returned to Germany and started working on *Der Himmel* shortly after the conservative party (with Helmut Kohl as chancellor) gained the majority in the German parliament. After thirteen years of Social Democratic government (SPD), Kohl's remembrance politics indicated an emphasis on returning (West) Germany to an unquestioned, powerful Western nation. One of the most controversial political gestures of commemoration during the Kohl administration was Ronald Reagan's visit to the *Wehrmacht*-cemetery in Bitburg. The controversy over this visit, as mentioned above, ignited the Historians' Debate between intellectuals from both sides of the political spectrum. The conservative representatives in this debate, the most well-known being Ernst Nolte, argued for historical revision of the Holocaust and World War II. The gist of their argument was that the Holocaust and World War II should be viewed as a causal reaction to the supposedly viable threat of communist Russia. Thus the conservative historians attempted to place the Holocaust in a chain of historical causes and effects, equalizing its impact with that of other genocides in the 20th century. Their argument might be read as a means of trivializing, or at least relativizing, Germany's horrendous past in order to strengthen a new national confidence and empower the country's political standing in the order of Western democracies.

While some distinct motifs associated with German film of the sixties and seventies are still alive in Wenders' 1987 release, they are renegotiated against the new political background of the conservative and conciliatory politics of the Kohl administration, which aimed at a "normalized," unified, and flourishing German nationhood. I will examine the

motif of the abandoned child in *Der Himmel über Berlin* in relationship with history, family, and identity within the cultural crosshairs of a new political era of neoconservative forces, a changing Soviet world, and revived nationalism in the dawn of Germany's unification. It appears that the new political circumstances in Germany not only drastically influenced the means of production of German films, but also, in Wenders' case, led to fantasies of unity and reconciliation including the redemption of the abandoned child.

As part of New German Cinema, Wenders' early career and oeuvre consistently offer images that can be read as versions of the abandoned child. As Cook and Gemünden describe in their introduction to *The Cinema of Wim Wenders*, Gemünden discusses Wenders' "fatherlessness" and the subsequent influence of American culture in more detail in *Framed Visions: Popular Culture, Americanization, and the Contemporary German and Austrian Imagination* (2010). Gemünden explains here that Wenders' oedipal relationship to America is reflected in the number of American male supporting roles in his films (*Framed Visions* 161).[1] According to Gemünden, these American male figures (Sam Fuller in *The State of Things* and *The American Friend*, Nicholas Ray in *The American Friend,* Peter Falk in *Wings of Desire*) appear as influential, generalized image-producing or -selling males with an untroubled masculinity (*Framed Visions* 166). Wenders' male leads, however, struggle with their masculinity. They are often portrayed as introspective, in a state of transition, and in an estranged relationship with a woman. Gemünden goes on to say that while father figures are often "borrowed" from American culture, Wenders' male-centered narratives reveal a significant lack of women, and love for the female is often replaced by an infatuation with (American) pop culture (*Framed Visions* 167). Moreover, Wenders' films repeatedly

[1] Gemünden describes the relationship to the American male figures as one that gets resolved in a male friendship, or, as Gemünden puts it, in an "oedi-pal" relationship that replaces the patricide (167).

thematize the search for a missing parent or parental figure, as in *Alice in the Cities*, *Paris, Texas,* and *The State of Things*. Whereas in the first two films the male lead's own state of abandonment seems to be reflected in the actual portrait of a child (Alice and Hunter, respectively) looking for her/his mother, *The State of Things* depicts the "abandonment" of a filmmaker and his entire crew and production by their Hollywood producer.

The motif of the abandoned child in the form of the lack of belonging receives further support in the tension between image and narrative that pervades Wenders' films. As Gemünden and Cook state, Wenders' early films prioritize the image over the narrative. It was his artistic philosophy at that time to convey, through the line of images, "the ineffable feel of things" and thus to "liberate spectators' visions" (*The Cinema* 8-19). With his focus on the image, Wenders intended to let the image "speak" and to enable "pure seeing," which is, according to Wenders, free of ideological influences and distorting narratives (Wenders qtd. in Gemünden, 20). Thus his early films tend to lack storyline and engage an open style to which the genre of the road movie lends itself. The road movie style and lack of engaging narrative in Wenders' films conjure a feeling of homelessness that he shares with the films of many of his New German Cinema colleagues. Largely due to increasing disappointment in Hollywood filmmaking, Wenders returned to Germany after several years of filmmaking in the United States in the late seventies and early eighties. Fascinated with what he saw in his country—in particular Berlin—after his extended absence, Wenders decided to shoot *Der Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*). As Cook points out in his article "Angels, Fiction, and History in Berlin: *Wings of Desire*," this film indicates a shift in Wenders' work from an image-centered style to one that reveals a search for narrative (164).

What evokes the motif of the abandoned child most strongly in *Der Himmel* is the

juxtaposition between the main plot line, Damiel's transformation from angel to human in this national setting of Germany's capitol, with the prevalence of children mostly portrayed in moments of solitude. Abandoned by God, the ultimate father figure, Damiel himself is an abandoned child.[2] As a middle-aged man in the late 1980s, Damiel represents Germany's second generation, whose childhood was affected by World War II or the difficulties related to the postwar years. Belonging to that age cohort, Damiel might be read as one of the German postwar child victims who lost their home, one or both parents in World War II, or who suffered from postwar familial conflicts such as those portrayed in texts by Böll, Borchart, and Sanders-Brahms.[3]

While the plot reveals references to the socio-political circumstances of the concept of the abandoned child as a cultural symptom of Germany's second generation through its usage of archival footage of World War II, the motif interacts more significantly with prevalent national themes. From a political perspective, the abandoned child is symbolized by Damiel's pursuit of his own history/story. This endeavor includes leaving behind former father figures associated with the past and acquiring discursive power in an, expectedly united, post-Cold War, national discourse. The idea of a new national discourse might be interpreted as providing new paternal structure. Choosing the path of "growing up" in order to leave behind a traumatized childhood is paralleled by an opposing development, which involves regressing toward the innocent life of a child to the point of giving oneself up to an all-encompassing maternal body that then emerges as a strong nationalist idea.

Thus, while in a large number of New German Cinema films and *Väterliteratur* the

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[2] In *After Images* Wenders explains that one of the first ideas for the film was the situation of angels abandoned by God in the skies above Berlin (219).

[3] The "second generation" describes the group of individuals born during the last years of war or during the immediate postwar years. The impact of the war on the childhood and youth of this generation has been one of the major themes of New German Cinema.

abandoned-child-motif revolves around a father-centered conflict—including Wenders' own pre-1980 releases—the filmmaker offers a solution to this struggle by allowing paternal and maternal structural powers to interweave throughout the plot. The new narrative resolves the struggle and generates new ideas that—quite contrary to the legacy of New German Cinema—abide by the contemporaneous political development. The film renders, on a structural and national level, the idea of reestablished, intact familial ties, and suggests that after decades of struggle with the father figure it is time to reunite the (national) family. The new family bond offers a more forward oriented, nationally and internationally conciliatory, unifying and patriotic path, on which the task of "mastering the past" appears to be accomplishable.

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A large part of the current scholarship of the film investigates *Der Himmel über Berlin* against the political background of the Historians' Debate. Roger F. Cook indicates that *Der Himmel* might be viewed as a reflection of the conservative national identity politics of the early Kohl era, since the film is infused with prevalent themes that construct a narrative about new beginnings and affirmative national identity ("Angels, Fiction and History" 182). The weaving of the narrative, according to Cook, is achieved through suture: a method of creating a narrative through the cutting and editing of film images. Jacques Lacan, according to Cook, describes suture as a major identity-forming process through which the subject gains his coherent self (165). Cook asserts that Wenders employs suture in a twofold way: as a filmic method to unfold the love story, and on a different level to weave together cultural themes in order to suture a new, undivided, coherent national identity (173).

Cook elaborates against the background of the contemporary Historians' Debate the

danger of myth-making and revisionism in *Der Himmel*, as the developing love story of Damiel and Marion might be read as a positive alternative story, an "epic of peace" of national proportions that excludes the past (184). Yet Cook's main argument is that the film's ambiguities get resolved in the strong message of an epic of peace, particularly expressed by the old Berlin resident known as Homer. He claims that the key to the alternative national epic in Wenders' film can be found in the references to Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," and therefore steers the film's notion of desire for new beginnings away from the association with ongoing neoconservative revisionism and instead toward the idea of a dialectical and responsible way of dealing with the past (184).

Robert Phillip Kolker and Peter Beicken focus in their 1993 book *The Films of Wim Wenders: Cinema as Vision and Desire* on the problematic tension that arises within the overdetermined allegorical inventory of Wenders' film. The authors claim that the tension revolves around three interwoven texts: first, "an intertextual web of allusions; second, an extraordinary, quasi-documentary perspective on Berlin, rendering an array of the painful affects of modernity; third, Wenders' attempt at domesticity and at resolving the problem of gender" (138). According to Kolker and Beicken, "*Wings of Desire* proposes that redemption occurs with a descent into physicality" (142). Damiel's angelic desire to become flesh can thus be seen as a "reverse resurrection," which, against the backdrop of cultural and historical themes, results in "a kind of self-absorption" in a romance with melodramatic gestures (152). The interplay between the romance of "mythic and universal proportion," postmodern self-reflexivity, and Germany's past, according to the authors, leaves nothing behind but a "heavily-mediated, mass culture joke" (152).

Kolker and Beicken state that juxtaposing the recurring theme of history's abyss with

Damiel's apotheosizing pursuit of domestic needs and heterosexual desire "trivializes [the film's] high concerns and endangers its complexity" (156). Finally, the authors point out that Wenders' film reflects the struggle of the second-generation, postwar Germans, and that it deals with central themes of contemporary impulses toward the fall of the Berlin Wall. Yet, according to Kolker and Beicken, Wenders resolves these themes, detached from their social implications, in the redemptive realm of his filmic images (160).

I would like to pick up on its main concerns revolving around (national) identity against the backdrop of Germany's past and the contemporary situation at the end of the Cold War, but in contrast to Cook's conclusion, I will add a perspective from which the film's themes, ideas, and images might be read as symptomatic of German postwar memory culture still in crisis. My approach is aimed at drawing attention to aspects of the film that shed light on the problematics that lie beneath the romance. Although Kolker and Beicken's essay reveals many insightful aspects of the ambiguity of the film, and although their ethical concerns regarding the film are justifiable, I argue that the film provides more than a romance embedded in a "heavily-mediated mass culture joke." On the contrary, the themes and motifs Wenders uses, the love story in particular, are overdetermined symptoms that speak in depth about the postwar West German memory crisis. The film reveals an underlying West German postwar sense of victimhood revolving around the motif of the abandoned child that the film seeks to redeem in a simplified conciliatory idea.

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Although the lead roles of the film are not children, children are numerously represented among the many extras. They play an important role as they reflect the angels' troubled identification and might be read as referring specifically to the disruption of or the

abandonment by maternal influences. The predominance of children and *Das Lied vom Kindsein* (Poem of Childhood) that pervades the soundtrack evoke a strong association between the angels and childhood. Most children depicted in the film are surrounded by a subtle notion of abandonment. There is the disabled child being pushed to walk by herself on her crippled legs, children searching for something to play with in the gutters of a back alley, and another child longing to be accepted by two other children. One child, apparently left alone in a war-stricken nocturnal urban environment, screams fearfully for his mother, while another child extra, sitting alone, waiting for action at the film set, shivers from the cold. They all express a sense of solitude and melancholy which they share with the angels, especially when meeting the angel's gaze. Since no adult human ever looks directly in the angels' eyes, the shot-reverse-shots signaling the responding look between child and angel remind the viewer of a mirror reflection. It is the situation in which the angel's gaze is actually "complete," since the object, in this case the child, is looking back at him. In Lacanian terms, the fulfilled dialectic in the gaze defines the angel as what he sees, namely a child.[4]

The poem *Lied vom Kindsein* (Poem of Childhood) by Austrian poet and prose writer Peter Handke underlines the important role of childhood as it functions as a frame narrative to the film, identifying the angel struggling with his symbolic childhood. The first half of the

[4] The point of departure of the mirror stage as described by Lacan is the subject's being determined by a sense of lack, the *manque à être*, which follows the perceived complete union with the mother and which the subject futilely pursues to regain. The component missing to overcome the constant lack, *l'objet petit a,* cannot be attained but remains representation. The infant's discovery of her own mirror image and her identification with it following her mother's redirection is, according to Lacan, an important moment in the child's search for compensating for her lack. At this phase, the child finds himself in a physically undeveloped situation, yet identifying with a complete but removed and thus fictional body image. Finding himself provides the child with the necessary sense of continuity: it "symbolizes the mental permanence of the I, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination" (Lacan as quoted in Rivkin and Ryan 179). Identification is therefore ambivalent: on one hand it renders a sense of completion in the search for unity, while on the other hand it perpetuates the sense of lack due to its alienating effect.

poem deals with being a child whose view of the world is not yet distorted by the conceptions of the grown-ups' world:

Als das Kind Kind war,
erwachte es einmal in einem fremden Bett
und jetzt immer wieder,
erschienen ihm viele Menschen schön
und jetzt nur noch im Glücksfall,
stellte es sich klar ein Paradies vor
und kann es jetzt höchstens ahnen,
konnte es sich Nichts nicht denken
und schaudert heute davor.

Als das Kind Kind war,
spielte es mit Begeisterung
und jetzt, so ganz bei der Sache wie damals, nur noch,
wenn diese Sache seine Arbeit ist. (Wenders and Handke *Der Himmel über Berlin* 79)

(When the child was a child,
it awoke once in a strange bed,
and now does so again and again.
Many people, then, seemed beautiful,
and now only a few do, by sheer luck.
It had visualized a clear image of Paradise,
and now can at most guess,
could not conceive of nothingness,
and shudders today at the thought.

When the child was a child,
It played with enthusiasm,
and, now, has just as much excitement as then,
but only when it concerns its work).[5]

The poem indicates that being a child is part of the past and evokes the sense of loss due to growing up. However, the person to whom the poem refers, who has supposedly lost his childhood and who logically would be the adult, is in the second half of the poem referred to as a child:

Als das Kind Kind war,
fielen ihm die Beeren wie nur Beeren in die Hand
und jetzt immer noch. (Wenders and Handke 132)

[5] Source of English translation: http://everything2.com/title/Lied+Vom+Kindsein

(When the child was a child,
Berries filled its hand as only berries do,
and do even now).

In the end it becomes apparent that the person who once was the child, still, or again, perceives the world through a child's eyes. The poem thus represents a two-sided development of a person: growing up but simultaneously retaining childhood characteristics. Thus the text represents a longing for childhood, which Germany's second generation has claimed to be deprived of as many references to a loveless childhood in *Väterliteratur* indicate. The images of children, as well as Handke's poem about childhood, reflect the angel's, or Germany's second generation's, underlying experience of parental abandonment due to being born into war or immediate postwar circumstances.

Childhood experiences in a not only physically shattered war-torn environment but also mentally traumatized family environment are a common theme in the memory culture of the second generation as Helma Sanders-Brahms illustrates in her 1980 release *Deutschland, bleiche Mutter* (*Germany, Pale Mother*). The archival footage in *Der Himmel über Berlin* represents the angels' historical retrospection. The footage predominantly depicts German war-torn urban structures whose visual effect culminates in the disturbing shots of several dead children on the rubble fields. These shots of innocent child-victims link the subtext surrounding the (abandoned) children to the immediate postwar period. They underline the angels' allegoric role as children of the war generation, whose first recognition of their object-world is a shattered image of their domestic environment and of *Mother* Earth.

The disrupted motherly realm receives further weight when Damiel listens to the memories of one of the extras at the American film set, as she remembers the rubble fields of Berlin: "Das Haus war zur Hälfte weg, etwas stand noch, na ja, wie lange? Ja, ich sehe noch

diese Frau vor mir, die da oben zwischen den Ruinen stand und schüttelte das Bett aus" (The house had half gone. Some of it still stood. For how long? Yes, I can still see this woman who was standing in the ruins and who was shaking the duvet [transl. film subtitles]) (Wenders and Handke 71). The woman leans back, and as we hear her memories, her face is superimposed with archival footage while Damiel closes his eyes. Their gestures imply that both have witnessed the same events. Their memories are shots of urban rubble fields among which so-called *Trümmerfrauen* (rubble women) clean up and sort, in meticulously performed teamwork, the rubble of the war's destruction. The extra's memories of the woman shaking the duvet in the ruins are accompanied by a shot of a house whose façade is so destroyed by a bomb that the individual rooms are exposed. In one of them a woman is standing, dusting off a duvet. The term *Trümmerfrauen*, a paramount trope in German postwar memory culture, emerged after the Allied forces called upon all German women between the age of fifteen and fifty to register for paid full-time clean-up work. The majority of *Trümmerfrauen* were widows with one to two children. This group of female workers has been highly honored in German postwar memory culture because of its supposedly significant contribution to the reconstruction of the country.[6]

One might suppose from this emphasis given a mere extra that she might have been one of them, and thus might be read as Wenders' homage to this group of German women. Yet it might also be read to suggest the "Frau in Trümmern," the "destitute women," and therefore the ruined mother: traumatized by war experiences that may include the loss of her husband

[6] Leonie Treber analyses the historical background behind the German postwar cultural memory topos *Trümmerfrau* in her 2014 book *Mythos der Trümmerfrauen: Von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines deutschen Erinnerungsortes*. She concludes that the topos is lacking historical evidence as most of the German reconstruction happened with the help of a heterogeneous group of construction companies, prisoners, and private helpers among which a small group were women. Only in Berlin and in the Soviet occupied sector were *Trümmerfrauen* a mass phenomenon (*Einleitung*).

and children and a physically destroyed home.[7] The absurdity in the shot of the woman, hanging on to her traditional realm of work when shaking the bed in the destroyed home, underlines the destruction of domestic life as well as stereotypical maternal roles and their spheres of influence in postwar Germany. The cultural code of the *Trümmerfrauen* in the archival footage corresponds to two components of the abandoned child: the lack of the father reflected indirectly in the vast number of postwar German women doing heavy physical work, and the lack of the mother due to the devastated world of the traditional German mother-figure of that time. Subsequent to the destroyed domestic realm, the mirror, in which the child is supposed to find her reflection and create an identity separate from the mother, is shattered. As an allegory of Germany's second generation, the angels are consequently "homeless." Their circumstances are emphasized by a lack of domesticity as they reside in the sky above Berlin, the State Library, and roam the streets at day and night.

Yet a less literal type of abandonment and homelessness might be symbolized in the angels' street roaming and free-floating existence that corresponds to the sphere of symbolic identification and thus revolves around the abandonment by the structural paternal role—the symbolic order, as Lacan calls it, that would assign a place within the laws of the object world through signifying power.[8] The angels are obviously detached from the human world; they can hear human thoughts but are otherwise unable to interact with men. And humans, except for children, are unable to see them. The bird's-eye, omnipresent view of the angels symbolized in the free-floating camera on the one hand represents their sublime, unbound

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[7]On a metaphorical level, the *Trümmerfrau* might be translated as "ruined woman" when representing the nation. Sander-Brahms draws on the connection of the postwar mother and the nation in *Germany, Pale Mother*. A stereotypical reading of the role of women at that time is justifiable since the film includes a fair deal of stereotypical gender politics, especially in regard to the role of Marion.

[8] Compare "The Mirrorstage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," and "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud" in Lacan's *Écrits*.

status, and on the other reveals a deracinated and nonintegrated position. The world of the angels is depicted in black and white, underlining the abstractness of their existence. Regardless of the individual actress or actor in the role of an angel, all of them wear the same dark, long coat and long hair. Their uniform, nongendered appearance reflects the angels' undefined subjecthood. Damiel is shown in numerous futile attempts to touch and hold something, yet the object he is trying to grasp is merely a weightless image of itself. In their constant effort to alleviate human suffering, the angels are restricted by their inability to communicate with humans. Only randomly does an adult sense the presence of an angel and is able to draw hope from it. The pervading sense of frustration about the angels' detachedness is shown in the futile attempt to save a young man from suicide and Cassiel's corresponding despair.

The notion of detachedness from any linear order gets further attention in the angels' perception of the humans' thoughts and history. The acoustic detection of the thoughts is arbitrary and fragmented and does not follow any chronological or contextualizing rule. Similarly uncontextualized is their witnessing of historical and prehistorical events. Their commentary on the geomorphic postglacial development of the landscape in central Europe accompanies long takes of serene nature—depicting water reflections, plants, and birds—that underline the angels' nonlinear perspective on these developments. Statements such as "Myriaden von Jahren waren nur die Fische gesprungen" (for myriads of years only fish were jumping) express the angels' timeless and all-encompassing situation of witnessing (Wenders and Handke 83). As their commentary reaches the emergence of humans, the footage coincides with shots of mostly man-made structures. A linear sense of history is introduced that is unique to the human perception while for the angels "auch die erste [Geschichte], vom

Gras, von der Sonne, von den Luftsprüngen, von den Ausrufen, dauert noch an" (also the first one [history], of the grass, of the sun, of the capers, of the exclamations, is still ongoing). Thus various stages of human history are described as happening simultaneously in the angels' perception (84). The angels lack a chronologically ordered existence and, considering their inability to intervene, can be interpreted as abandoned by history.

As elaborated above, the abandoned child concept refers to several aspects of German postwar culture. It includes the physical lack of a parent, the abrupt deprivation of a pervasive ideological order after the disempowerment of the Nazi Regime, and the cultural and communicative vacuum in which the second generation grew. Interestingly, according to Cook, one of Wenders' initial concepts of the film indicated that God had abandoned the angels as doomed in the ether of postwar German misery, which sums up quite tellingly the situation they share with Germany's second generation (163). As Wenders engages motifs with strong national weight, such as the city itself, the symbolic abandonment includes the issue revolving around German postwar *national* identity.

Der Himmel über Berlin is infused with the desire to overcome the powerlessness of symbolic abandonment, as indicated in Damiel's discontent with his lack of temporal and physical identification. He feels frustrated with his weightless spiritual existence in eternity: "Ich möchte bei jedem Schritt oder Windstoß 'Jetzt' und 'Jetzt' und 'Jetzt' sagen können und nicht wie immer 'seit je' und 'in Ewigkeit'" (I want to say to say 'Now' and 'Now' and 'Now' with every step or wind gust, instead of 'always' and 'for eternity' [translation mine]) (Wenders and Handke 20). When reminiscing about the events of history that he and his companion angel Cassiel have witnessed, Damiel expresses his desire for identification even more specifically: he wants to "[sich] selber eine Geschichte erstreiten. Was ich weiß von

meinem zeitlosen Herabschauen verwandeln ins Aushalten eines jähen Anblicks" (to accomplish a history/story for myself. To transform what I know from my timeless looking-down [on the world] into an unexpected display) (84). Damiel wants to transform every observation from his timeless omniscient perspective into the experience of an unforeseeable, linear sequence of events. Thus he expresses desire for subjection as a human in what Lacan calls the symbolic order. Damiel feels as if he has been outside long enough ("[i]ch bin schließlich lang genug draußen gewesen") (Wenders 84). He feels absent ("lang genug abwesend") and excluded from the world ("lang genug aus der Welt") (85). He feels left out, and thus abandoned.

From the national perspective, his comments allude to Germany's stifled political power while under the control of the Allied forces. They thus harmonize with the gist of Kohl's political agenda toward unification. Damiel wants to enter into *Weltgeschichte* ("hinein in die Weltgeschichte") and get rid of the world behind the world ("Weg mit der Welt hinter der Welt!").[9] Viewed from a national perspective, the world stifling him—Germany's past—should be dismissed in order to regain the role of a big player in world history.

Powerful imagery supports the idea of (re)writing the angels' history at the Berlin state library. The buzzing soundtrack of texts being read and the shots of intently focused readers make this a secluded place of national significance as it evokes the idiom "das Land der Dichter und Denker" (the land of poets and thinkers). The concentrated angelic presence in this *Bildungs*-oasis turns the library into the headquarters of the angels' detached, mind-oriented, and solemn operation. Interestingly, it is at this place where Damiel shows his

[9]*Weltgeschichte* does not translate well into *world history* since it also includes a strong notion of (global) *current events*.

inclination toward becoming human for the first time. As Kolker and Beicken point out, Damiel poses by the balustrade in a crucifix position, immersing himself in the buzzing sound of condensed thoughts and foreshadowing his sacrifice of becoming flesh:

> Placed in the library, this representation suggests a bridging of the body, soul and intellect, a combination of flesh and spirit within the archive of human memory […] The combination of human and divine is further worked through in a gesture made by Damiel in the course of this sequence. He takes a pen from the table … Seated on a reading chair, fully clothed in his winter garments … arms stretched out and angled as if pinned to a cross, the white pen resting on his lap, his image suggests that of a redeemer who exists within and without the world, his body containing the instrument of inscription. He embodies it and it becomes part of his own embodiment. By placing it on his lap, it is given a phallic presence, a sign in which writing, language and the body are unified by erotic desire. (149-150)

Kolker and Beicken propose that this sequence symbolizes redemption in the union of body and spirit. I would like to take this idea further and contextualize it within the national and historical specificity of the film. Damiel's gesture surrounding the image of the pen might also be read as a longing to flee an incarcerated, mind-oriented existence by wanting to (re)write his history. At the same time, by continuing the authors' observation of the pen as a phallic symbol, Damiel expresses here explicitly the desire to write his own story as a socially embedded narrative. He wants to be the spoken subject, but also to write a story, which means achieving a signifying position. The abandoned child not only yearns for the identifying power of the paternal agency, but also for overcoming a certain symbolic impotence as a Western nation.

Following this sequence of Damiel in *imitatio Christi*, the old man Homer is introduced in the film. He is, as Kolker and Beicken observe, the "earthly counterpart" to Damiel, who embodies the old Berlin (151). Tellingly, as Homer arduously climbs the library stairs, seemingly disoriented and tired (of life), Damiel passes him on his way downstairs, suggesting not only his descent to earth but also the replacement of a father figure. While

Homer stands for the father of the ancient epics, Damiel might be read as embodying the monumental role of the modern epic introducing and reclaiming a new national phase of "Dichter und Denker."

Damiel implements his desire to be part of world history and to write his own story by becoming human. Yet, after the birth-like moment that marks Damiel's transformation to human life, his journey follows a highly ambiguous path. On the one hand he follows his desire to be placed in a discursive environment of the symbolic order, which he achieves through the progressive, forward-looking transformation into an adult human. On the other hand, his journey indicates a reversed turn toward childhood that culminates in what might be read as a regressive course toward the narcissistic bond with the mother. Thus, as a result of the childhood experience of a disrupted parental relationship that Damiel symbolizes, he pursues several ambiguous endeavors: being reborn, growing up, and writing his own story, while simultaneously longing to remain a child and to be engulfed by an all-consuming female ("sie war um mich"[she was around me]).

Damiel's desire, finding his woman, leads to his physical encounter with the city space of Berlin. In a birth-like moment, it appears as if Damiel goes through the Berlin wall after briefly lingering in a quasi-reverse state of limbo while walking the death strip. He is placed on the west side of the wall like a helpless child, a rusty armor drops from the sky on top of him like a placenta from his prenatal angelic state. The armor violently hits his head—a symbol of a birth-experience tainted by the circumstances of war. As the film turns into color parallel to Damiel's "birth," Damiel's first steps in physicality might be read as a child-like discovery of the object world: he learns taste, colors, running, and jumping. Child-signifiers continue to play an important role in these sequences, as the first people he

encounters are children looking down at him as he is lying on the ground. Damiel skips through Berlin's streets like a child, while his voice recites the second part of *Lied vom Kindsein*:

Als das Kind Kind war,
Genügten ihm als Nahrung Apfel, Brot,
Und so ist es immer noch.

Als das Kind Kind war,
Fielen ihm die Beeren wie nur Beeren in die Hand
Und jetzt immer noch,
Machten ihm die frischen Walnüsse eine rauhe Zunge
Und jetzt immer noch,
Hatte es auf jedem Berg
Die Sehnsucht nach dem immer höheren Berg,
Und in jeder Stadt
Die Sehnsucht nach der noch größeren Stadt,
Und das ist immer noch so,
Griff im Wipfel eines Baums nach dem Kirschen in einem Hochgefühl
Wie auch heute noch,
Hatte eine Scheu vor jedem Fremden
Und hat sie immer noch,
Wartete es auf den ersten Schnee,
Und wartet so immer noch.

Als das Kind Kind war,
Warf es einen Stock als Lanze gegen den Baum,
Und sie zittert da heute noch. (Wenders and Handke 132-33)

(When the child was a child,
It was enough for it to eat an apple, bread,
And so it is even now.

When the child was a child,
Berries filled its hand as only berries do,
and do even now,
Fresh walnuts made its tongue raw,
and do even now,
it had, on every mountaintop,
the longing for a higher mountain yet,
and in every city,
the longing for an even greater city,
and that is still so,
It reached for cherries in topmost branches of trees

with an elation it still has today,
has a shyness in front of strangers,
and has that even now.
It awaited the first snow,
And waits that way even now.

When the child was a child,
It threw a stick like a lance against a tree,
And it quivers there still today).

The poem indicates a twofold, reciprocal development that includes the changes of growing up but also the nostalgia for childhood. Hence there is not only a progressive development of the child becoming an adult—which finishes this state and makes it impossible to return—but also a regressive development of the adult recovering characteristics of being a child. The climax of the poem indicates a sense of satisfaction that derives from the simultaneity of being grown-up and being a child. The latter corresponds to Damiel's child-like behavior after his moment of "birth." Thus the poem, and therefore the film, reveal a strong underlying nostalgic desire of becoming, or remaining, a child, which, as Steven Brockmann claims, infuses the entire film as a "longing for innocence" (406). The contradiction between simultaneously maturing and becoming a child is exemplary for Damiel's ambivalent desires to, on the one hand, take his place in the *Weltgeschichte* and achieve his own story, and on the other hand, to yearn regressively for childhood, and even further, for ultimate satisfaction of the complete unity with the mother.

One of the first signs of the desire to be re-engulfed by the mother is the moment of Damiel's discovering the circus through the narrow passage to a courtyard while still being an angel. Damiel enters the circus tent and is seemingly fascinated with the French aerial artist Marion (whose name is significant here as well, as it is known to be a version of *Mary*, Mother of God, therefore underlining Marion's role as a projection of archetypal maternal

desires). Although it is part of his angelic existence to be omnipresent, following Marion into her camping trailer after her practice evokes the notion of stalking. At this point his angelic existence might be read as infused with the first hint of human sexual desire. Furthermore, following Marion into her trailer, which is an egg-shaped, cell-like environment, suggests a re-entry into the womb.

Damiel becomes one, not with his actual mother, but with the persona who incorporates certain aspects of longing for ultimate plenitude. At their first physical meeting at the Hotel Esplanade, Marion describes how she is finally one ("ich bin heute endlich einsam" [*einsam* not as in *lonely*, but *one* as opposed to *zweisam* = dual]); with Damiel she is whole at last ("Ich bin endlich ganz"[I am finally whole]) (Wenders 160). The close-up of Marion's face, occupying the entire frame, supports the notion of the totality of an all-engulfing female figure. Damiel immerses himself in her, so that it becomes impossible to say "[w]er war wer?" (who is who?) since he "[er ist] in ihr… und sie war um [ihn]" (is entirely inside her and she is completely surrounding [him]) (165). The two individuals merge into one, not partially, but in their wholeness, so that the individual becomes unrecognizable, without identity, as in a prenatal bond.

Marion's political monologue reinforces totality during her encounter with Damiel at the Hotel Esplanade. She introduces their moment of union as an ultimate event when things acquire gravitas ("Jetzt ist es ernst" [Now it is serious]), where decisions are made "Neumond der Entscheidung"[(new moon of decisions]), and which correspond to strong symbols of renewal such as the new moon ("heut ist Neumond"[it is new moon today]) (Wenders 160). Her list of totalizing statements goes on to declare that the whole world takes part in their decision ("Nicht nur die ganze Stadt, die ganze Welt nimmt gerade Teil an

unserer Entscheidung"[Not only the entire city, the entire world is participating in our decision]). She states that they embody something that the masses desire ("Wir verkörpern etwas. Wir sitzen auf dem Platz der Volkes, und der ganze Platz ist voll von Leuten, die sich das gleiche wünschen" [We embody something. We are sitting on the people's square, and the entire square is packed with people who wish the same]) (162). She describes, with, as Kolker and Beicken note, a "fascitoid undertone," the significance of their union as equivalent to a totalitarian political figure leading the masses on the people's square (144).[10] This climactic scene evokes unease, particularly in regard to the film's subtext of the quest for a renewed German identity in times of Kohl's neo-conservatism, the associated *Historikerstreit,* and in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Before Damiel arrives at the ambiguous union with Marion, whom I have identified as representing his longing for an all-embracing mother figure, he symbolically bids farewell to significant father figures. One, whom I have mentioned before, is the old man Homer. Not only does Homer embody the old Berlin and a reference to an outdated national identity, but, as a German Jew, Kurt Bois (the actor who plays Homer) also is survivor of the Holocaust, a reminder of the almost eradicated German Jewry, and therefore of its absence. The narrative surrounding Homer functions like a parallel storyline to Damiel's narrative, surrounding his transition to human life.

Yet contrary to Damiel's fulfillment in becoming human and being in union with Marion, Homer's search remains futile. As he walks along the Berlin Wall and across the barren field of the former Potsdamer Platz—apparently unaware of the events that led to the destruction of this part of Berlin ("Ich kann den Potsdamer Platz nicht finden!…Das kann er

[10] The crowded "Platz des Volkes" (the people's square) alludes to several historical moments of both German totalitarian regimes in the 20th century, such as the National Party Convention of the NSDAP in Nuremberg or the Tag der Republik in the time of the GDR at the Alexanderplatz in Berlin.

doch nicht sein" [I can't find Potsdam square!...This can't be it])—Homer looks for the Potsdamer Platz as it is manifested in his memory: a vibrant place in the center of the city where he used to drink his coffee and smoke a cigar at a café ("[d]enn am Potsdamer Platz, da war doch das Café Josti …. Nachmittags habe ich mich da unterhalten und einen Kaffee getrunken, das Publikum beobachtet, vorher eine Zigarre geraucht" [because Potsdam square is where Café Josti used to be …. In the afternoon I used to have a chat and coffee there, watched people, and smoked a cigar]). His memory of the prewar Potsdamer Platz, and his apparent amnesia regarding its destruction, position Homer as a resident of prewar Berlin. He goes on describing this lively place of the beginning of the 20th century until his memory becomes vague as things change: "[u]nd dann hingen plötzlich Fahnen dort, der ganze Platz war vollgehängt und die Leute waren gar nicht mehr freundlich und die Polizei auch nicht" (all of a sudden the square is full of flags and the people are no longer friendly and neither are the police). Homer's onset of blurring memory corresponds to the takeover of the Nazi regime and indicates a subsequent change in his personal life. Furthermore, his observation of the unfriendliness among the people around him might be read as his perspective from the victim position as a Jew in the rise of the Third Reich. The scene of Homer's search for the Potsdamer Platz ends with his questions: "Wo sind meine Helden? Wo seid ihr, meine Kinder? Wo sind die Meinigen?"(where are my heroes? Where are you, my children? Where are my people?). Which, in the context of his victim position as Jew, might be read as asking for his people who no longer exist: the (German) Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. At the end of the film, while Damiel celebrates the completion of his search, the union with Marion, Homer, in contrast, is wandering alone and seemingly lost, left out of the film's main narrative, and still looking for his people. On the one hand, Damiel's relationship to

Homer might be read as a farewell to a father figure, an outdated German identity, and to the old Berlin. On the other hand, within the context of Homer's role as German Jew, the film indicates that both Homer's personal story of victimhood and the ethnic victimhood of German Jewry are pushed toward the margin by Damiel's pursuit of a new national identity. Homer as storyteller (the angel of the epics/narrative) turns into a disregarded or mocked organ grinder at the borderline of the (German) no-man's-land, to whom no one any longer listens ("wie er vom Engel der Erzählung zum unbeachteten oder verlachten Leiermann draußen an der Schwelle zum Niemandsland wurde").

Similarly fatherly and also Jewish is Peter Falk. Just like Damiel, the character Falk is a former angel who went through the transition of becoming human. He plays "himself" in Wenders' film, while playing a role in an American detective film being shot simultaneously with Damiel's love story at a former air-raid protection bunker in Berlin. Aside from representing the double in his role as angel-becoming-human, Falk is doubled in other ways as well. Similarly to Bois, due to his Jewish background and the thematic and topographic closeness of the film set (a former air-raid protection bunker of World War II) to the Holocaust and World War II, Falk might also be read as representing the past. Damiel first visits the air protection bunker film set after assuming his physical body to take Falk up on his offer of friendship. Damiel and Falk shake hands across the fence of the film set, a gesture that had been initiated by Falk several times during Damiel's existence as angel. Wenders creates a conciliatory moment in his German film text that carries a strong symbolic value: the representative of Jewish victims literally reaches out to his German counterpart, the symbolic descendent of Holocaust perpetrators, and offers his friendship, which plays an important role in Damiel's transition to finding his place in the object world and thus his

(national) identity. Since Falk also used to be an Angel who has since become human, Damiel employs him as a kind of mentor for his human endeavors. Falk reacts in a quite "fatherly" manner by sending him off in a friendly way to find out by himself what life (as a human) is about. Damiel receives the green light through Falk's fatherly and Jewish blessing to pursue his interest in women, in particular Marion.

Falk's nationality makes his symbolic value more complex in addition to his role as proxy for absent (German) Jews. As an American, Falk also symbolizes one of the allied nations and thus a former opponent, but also liberator and substitute for parental authority. Wenders creates in Falk a likable friend but an elusive character (playing himself in a fictional film) whose only authenticity is his being an actor. He is a fascinating and popular aspect in *Der Himmel,* as the angels' attraction to him also underscores. However, while Cassiel, seemingly captivated, watches the shooting of the film at the air protection bunker, Damiel distracts his attention to the circus: "Komm, ich zeig dir etwas anderes" (Come on, I'll show you something else). His comment might be read as a redirection of Cassiel's attention to something better since it involves Marion, and therefore as a renunciation of the film set. Wenders creates an opposition between Falk and his surroundings (the American film set) and Damiel and Marion's love story, through which the latter might be read as the more genuine, more relevant, and more meaningful narrative than the entertaining, but elusive and unstable, narrative revolving around Peter Falk. Thus, in his conciliatory handshake with Falk, one might also read a final farewell to American culture as parental surrogate to the postwar West German national identity.

Wenders infuses both Falk's and Homer's roles with characteristics of paternal figures, yet they are both Jewish and therefore also symbolic of Germany's victims. With

their ambivalent and unresolved conflation of role functions, Homer and Falk, aside from representing seemingly outdated cultural influences, might read as vehicles of the collective unconscious of the German war generation that has been passed on to the second generation. Thus the father figures, from which Damiel departs in order to engage in his new path of identification, represent the inherited guilt of the father generation, which Wenders addresses in *Der Himmel*, but due to the lack of integration of the two parts in the actual *telos* of his diegesis, they represent how Germany's responsibility for the Holocaust gets repressed in favor of a simplified and rather homogeneous text of new German identity. Despite the conciliatory gestures between Falk and Damiel, Damiel attempts to depart from his inherited responsibility. And as Jews, both Homer and Falk become again devalued in Wenders' diegesis in which their joker-like parts are left behind in the less meaningful periphery.

While Homer and Falk represent the past that Damiel leaves behind, no actual father figure replaces them. The new father figure is the film diegesis and all its national emblems that emerge in the final images of Marion and Damiel. As mentioned above, the filmic style evolves, according to Cook, concomitantly with Damiel's becoming human, from image- and object-centered, long, relatively random shots in black and white and with little editing, to color and increased suture editing as Damiel enters the human world. It is this style which takes on a paternal role. As Kaja Silverman points out in *Subjects of Semiotics* (1983), the concept of suture initially emerged in Lacanian psychoanalysis. It describes the process of the subject's taking his or her place in the symbolic order. While signified, the subject also obtains a signifying role in the symbolic order: "it receives meaning on the expense of being" and stands in for an element in the structure that is lacking (219).

In film theory, writes Silverman, suture takes place on the syntactical level of the film

"by means of the interlocking shots" (220). The first shot, which is "un-relativized," has no frame of reference and appears to present the imaginary plenitude. "It is the site of jouissance" similar to the situation of the infant prior to discovering her mirror reflection (220). In the shots following, the spectator's awareness of the frame expands to comprehend the limitations it presents, and thus the lack: that which is hiding beyond the frame. The one absent outside the frame has, according to Silverman, all the privileges of the name of the father: "potency, knowledge, transcendental vision, self-sufficiency, and discursive power. It is … the speaking subject of the cinematic text" (221). This "Absent One" creates and perpetuates the desire for more and suspends the viewer's relation to the reality outside the cinema. The reverse shot promises to redeem the unpleasurable quality of the lack and links the viewer's gaze to one of the film's characters. Yet, as Silverman continues, each shot/cut evokes a new sense of lack that the viewing subject seeks to fill in. Thus the viewer undergoes a sequence of "castrating coherence" that assigns the viewing subject its discursive position within the film (222). After departing from the figures symbolizing the past—the Holocaust, the old Classic epics, American culture surrounding Hollywood—a new epical era emerges centered in Berlin surrounding national cinema rooted in a new German identity.

In the wake of the effects of substantial changes in German politics and the German film industry in the 1980s, Wenders coalesces in *Der Himmel* paramount themes related to West German postwar cultural memory. The film reflects the transformation of themes and issues that New German Cinema dealt with in the 1960s and 70s, but New German Cinema is one of the paramount sources of cultural texts reflecting the cultural memory issues of West Germany. Themes related to the evolution of German film in *Der Himmel* are tightly

interwoven with cultural memory issues. Therefore, the disrupted parental instances as a driving force behind the diegesis of *Der Himmel* represent the situation of Germany's second generation but also the circumstances of German film. The angels' symbolic void represents their abandonment by the paternal figure who provides identification. On his way to becoming human, Damiel bids farewell to his powerless existence and related discourses of national identity of the 20th century as might be read in his relationship to Homer. Yet he also departs from American surrogate paternal agency as embodied by Peter Falk. This gesture might be read as criticism of American film as entertainment-driven and lacking substance.

Subsequent to leaving Homer and Falk, who represent a great deal of the ambivalences of Germany's 20th-century history and culture, Damiel engages in a narrowed and exclusionary union of complete cathectic fulfillment, which supposedly revokes the situation of abandonment in the West German postwar unease. The abandoned child as represented by Damiel engages in a love relationship of metaphorical proportion, which not only ends the abandoned state but suggests a post-Wall German national identity that yet again has a culturally narrowed outlook. Ending the postwar sense of abandonment in a fantasy of a domestic heterosexual relationship—albeit with a bicultural hint—runs the risk of promoting a potential post-Wall, renewed German national identity, that, in its total focus on itself, might be read as exclusionary toward the commemoration of German victims, German Jewish life, and generally the upheavals of Germany's past and its consequences.

Hans-Ulrich Treichel's *Der Verlorene*

Hans-Ulrich Treichel, born in 1952 in West Germany, belongs, like Wim Wenders, to the first generation born after World War II. He is the child of refugees who fled from the Eastern territories to East Westphalia were Treichel spent his childhood. Growing up in the 1950s and early 60s, his childhood was more influenced by West Germany's economic revival rather than the physical and economic destruction of the late 1940s. A trained literary scholar, Treichel started his poetic writing career in the late 1970s. *Der Verlorene*, published in 1998, was his first novel and his first literary breakthrough, which explores the postwar situation of a West German family whose first child went missing during the flight from former German territories in Eastern Europe. Treichel addresses the theme of the lost child in two later novels, *Menschenflug* (2005) and *Anatolin* (2008), from a temporally advanced perspective. While the topic of all novels is autobiographically influenced by one event in Treichel's own family, the figurative inventory in all three texts does not match, and thus they are not sequels but independent novels.

Like in *Der Himmel*, the situation of abandonment in Treichel's *Der Verlorene* is related to the experience of World War II. However, whereas the triangular structure in *Der Himmel* plays rather a metaphorical role, in Teichel's novel an actual individual family presents the narrative frame. The abandoned child theme originates in the parents' preoccupation with the trauma of the past, and their ensuing inability to create a psychologically nurturing environment to their child born postwar, the novel's first-person narrator. The cause for the parents' preoccupation is the loss of their first born son during the parents' flight from the Russian army in former East Prussia before the narrator was born.

The plot starts with the boy's coming to terms with the fact that his brother did not

die in the war as he was previously told, but was lost during the escape from the former Eastern territories. In the wake of being raped by Russian soldiers, the mother handed her infant, the narrator's older brother, to a stranger in the group of refugees and then lost sight of them both. The loss of the firstborn son infuses the postwar family dynamics with an unspoken sense of guilt and shame. The narrator was born into the postwar emotional situation of guilt and loss of his parents, in which he, the second son, appears emotionally lost as well: his existence is secondary to the parents' longing for the firstborn; he feels less cared for, suffers under the imperious father and the melancholic mother, and therefore feels emotionally abandoned. The emotional stress expresses itself in the boy's facial nerve dysfunction, which lets him grin compulsively. He participates only grudgingly in family routines and describes the family's rather dire Sunday outings as torturous. To the father's chagrin, the son, being motion sick, repeatedly vomits in his father's new cars, typical symbols of the economic upturn of that time.

As the new cars bespeak, the father's meat-processing business is successful, which is the father's delight as are the annual slaughter feasts. But neither lifts the mother's mood, as she finds only hope in the search endeavors for her lost son. The narrator follows the family's attempt to find out whether an adolescent male who lost his parents during their flight is the lost son, Arnold. The search efforts include expansive communication with governmental youth offices, the Red Cross, and finally anatomical tests executed by the institute of forensic anthropology in Heidelberg. The test compares the sizes of certain body parts of the narrator's family with those of the so-called "foundling 2307" whom they hope is Arnold. While no definite conclusion can be drawn from the results of these investigations, the parents do not give up on finding Arnold. Yet the stress that comes along with the

uncertainty regarding Arnold's whereabouts and the father's prospering business leads to the father's heart attack and subsequent death. The mother befriends and later marries the town marshal with whom she continues looking for Arnold. The new husband is able to arrange a meeting with "foundling 2307" who could potentially be Arnold. While pulling up to the meeting place, the narrator catches sight of the young man and notices a perplexing similarity between him and the young man. The mother changes her mind after seeing the young man and, to the narrator's astonishment, withdraws from the plan of finding her long-lost child.

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Scholars writing about Treichel's *Der Verlorene* have focused on the text's reflection on German wartime experience,[11] the portrayal of the economic upturn as a means of dealing with guilt and trauma,[12]and the son's failed familial identification.[13] While some scholars elaborate on the difference between the text's depiction of generational conflict and the second generation's struggle with their parents,[14] the motif of the abandoned child as

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[11] Martina Ölke elaborates in her 2007 essay "Flucht und Vertreibung in Hans-Ulrich Treichels *Der Verlorene* und *Menschenflug* und in Günter Grass' *Im Krebsgang*" that Treichel does not link the family's past in Der *Verlorene* to a greater discourse revolving around German suffering as does Grass in his 2002 novel *Im Krebsgang*. Rather, he interweaves the individual family trauma with themes of responsibility and guilt (10).

[12] Edward T. Larkin argues in "Hans-Ulrich Treichel's *Der Verlorene*: Digesting the Past" that food and luxury items in *Der Verlorene* are means to compensate trauma: "[t]he emphasis on the material and bodily portends the continuation of an unthinking, uncritical way of being in the world. One is «lost» in this novel because one has not sought, perhaps as the young narrator now attempts, to move beyond a tradition of materiality" (156). The parents' obsession with materiality prevents them from addressing the contradictory feelings of victimhood and guilt, yet the narrator son shows signs of breaking away from the family's psychic paralysis (156-7).

[13] David Clarke focuses in "The Place of German Wartime Suffering in Hans-Ulrich Treichel's Family Texts" on the failed familial identification of the younger sons in Treichel's texts that portray the event of the lost son: "the author has developed a number of motifs that reflect on the particular function of the parents' experience of expulsion from the east and their loss of a child in terms of the failed or problematic familial socialization of the younger sons he portrays" (119). Clarke particularly underlines the failed recognition of the son by the father.

[14]Stuart Taberner elaborates in "Hans-Ulrich Treichel's *Der Verlorene* and the Problem of German Wartime Suffering" on the distinction between Treichel's narrator-son and other generational conflicts between the war-generation and their children:

> At the same time, the occasional self-righteousness of the 'second generation' is exposed as an involuntarily reaction to their own agonies: the lack of intimacy between generations divided by wartime complicity and suffering, the taboo on discussing this pain and the impossibility of identity, whether national or personal. There is, therefore, no sentimental victimhood in this text, nor does it bolster the revisionism of the New Right, nor even the complacency of the Left. (127)

continuous symptom of history has been peripheral to the discussion.

Treichel's family scenario and its situation of childhood abandonment is reminiscent of the narrative structure of *Väterliteratur* as it offers the critical perspective of the postwar born son on his parents' postwar life and their role during World War II. However, *Der Verlorene* reveals a departure from that structure by including a lost sibling as part of the parents' own war-related trauma. It is a breach that is caused by the secondary abandonment of the second son due to the abandonment of the actual war baby. Untypical for the often single-minded attack of the parents in many novels associated with *Väterliteratur*, the narrative structure in Treichel's family situation opens a space of reflection, allowing ambivalences to unfold and flexibility in the perspectives on the past.

The detachment from the second generation's self-righteousness is replaced by Treichel's attempt to create a space of reflection around the notion of the abandoned child and around the concept of victimhood in general. The reflective space allows ambivalences and leads to relativizing the absolute status of victimhood. Yet, as the text allows a broader contextualization of victimhood, the abandoned child motif is not contested or negated, but Treichel underlines its continuity as a symptom of history. The continuity of the abandoned child as a symptom of history, despite all changes it undergoes due to the passage of time, is further emphasized in Treichel's later texts *Menschenflug* and *Anatolin*, which re-contextualize the postwar abandoned child at a different point in time. Treichel introduces in *Der Verlorene* a way of looking at the past, following the principles of continuity and contextualization, which increasingly includes different perspectives while not passing into revisionism.

Treichel's ironic style compensates the tension that may arise by trying to

accommodate various, sometimes conflicting perspectives. The narrator's first-person observations of his parents' life, the father's business successes and their hopes, failures, and disappointments articulate competing structures of angst, *schadenfreude*, and sometimes grotesque descriptions. They are filtered by irony and disclose a self-critical and even humorous undercurrent. At the same time, the humorous undertone does not elide or diminish the horror of the situation. *Der Verlorene* does not ridicule the suffering involved, which includes not only the situation of the emotional abandonment of the narrator but also the acknowledgement of the parents' war-related trauma. Treichel's ironic style allows the coexistence of several aspects of the past and differing perceptions of suffering.

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Treichel introduces the narrator's postwar family dynamic through the mother's arrangement of the family photo album, which includes pictures of the lost son as well as the second son, the narrator. Not only are the brother's photos favorably positioned and enlarged in the album, they are also more intently looked at and more frequently commented on, especially by the mother. The narrator explains that "[er] beneidete den Bruder um seine Freude, [er] beneidete den Bruder um seine weiße Wolldecke, [er] beneidete den Bruder um seinen Platz im Photoalbum" ([he] envied him his happiness, [he] envied him the white blanket, and [he] envied him the place in the photoalbum, too [this and all following translations of *Der Verlorene* by Carol Brown Janeway]) (7). Based on the arrangement, size, and composition of the photographs, Arnold, the brother, appears not only as a "happy person but also an important person," whereas the childhood pictures of the narrator are smaller, and he is usually only partially depicted, half covered by someone else or in the margin of the frame (8-9). The narrator would not have been bothered too much by his

marginalized and fragmented presence in the family album had it not been for the mother's habit of sitting down and showing her son the family photos. The narrator describes that his mother,

> daβ über die kleinen und winzigen und mit der Box geschossenen Photos auf denen [er]beziehungsweise einzelne Körperteile von [ihm] zu sehen waren ziemlich schnell hinweggegangen wurde, währen das [ihm] gleichsam lebensgroβ erscheinende Photo, auf dem [sein] Bruder Arnold zu sehen war, Anlaβ zur unerschöpflichen Betrachtung bot. Das hatte zur Folge, daβ ich …mit zerkniffenem Gesicht und miβlaunig neben meiner Mutter … saβ und den fröhlichen und gutgelaunten Arnold betrachtete während meine Mutter zusehends ergriffener wurde. (9)
>
> ([e]very time, the little tiny Box Brownie that showed [him] or rather various parts of [him] were leafed through hastely, while the photo of Arnold, which seemed life-size to [him] was the object of endless contemplation. As a result I usually sat next to my mother … looking as misarlabel as I felt, and staring at cheerful and un-miserable Arnold, as my mother go more and more upset).

The photographic depiction of the children and the ritual involving the family album illuminate the parents' cathectic energy tied to the lost son and their memorabilia. The photographs and surrounding rituals result in the second son's emotional abandonment.

Not only does the photo album represent a mapping of the current family dynamics in which the narrator grows up while introducing the narrative, it also exemplifies how every aspect of the current family's life in Treichel's text is an expression of the past. The photo album and its arrangement centered on the lost son introduce the motif of various death-related notions in the narrator's postwar family life and his parents' preoccupation with the fetish. As Christian Metz elaborates in his essay *Photography and Fetish*, taking a photograph—the snapshot, the freeze, and following standstill of the picture—resembles the moment of death: "The photographic take is immediate and definitive, like death and like the constitution of the fetish in the unconscious, fixed by a glance in childhood, unchanged and always active later" (84). The images of the lost son represent the loss itself but at the same

time guard the mother from the experience of loss and the subsequent necessity of coping with it. The mother continues this state of melancholia in the bureaucratic searches for her son that she enjoys as perpetuating processes rather than as a means to find results. The photos exemplify the narrator's marginalized position within the family: quasi off-frame, in the avoided field of vision.

Because he is involuntarily placed in the marginal space of the family psyche, the narrator's childhood life is accompanied by a general feeling of shame and guilt:

> Ich begriff auch, daß Arnold dafür verantwortlich war, daß ich von Anfang an in einer von Schuld und Scham vergifteten Atmosphäre aufgewachsen war. Vom Tag meiner Geburt an herrschte ein Gefühl von Schuld und Scham in der Familie, ohne daß ich wußte, warum (17).
>
> (I also understood that Arnold was responsible from the very beginning for my growing up in an atmosphere poisoned with guilt and shame. From the day of my birth, guilt and shame had ruled the family, without my knowing why).

His parents passed on their shame and guilt, which he perceives as originating around the loss of his brother.

The parents pretend to live a "normal" life, which reinforces their son's disorientation and the sense of being lost. The parents attempt to hide their issues in the family's weekly field trips. Every Sunday the family drive to a nearby sightseeing and hiking destination. The narrator describes these outings as "wahre Schuld- und Schamprozessionen. Wobei auch die Eltern während dieser Ausflüge einen bedrückten und gepeinigten Eindruck machten" (regular penetential processions of shame and guilt. My parents also seemed depressed and tormented) (19). According to the narrator, the parents only drag themselves out of the house for the family outings, while on one hand feeling guilty for disrupting their work routine, and on the other hand feeling committed to observing the Christian tradition of putting work down and honoring the Sunday (19). The field trips are an attempt to pursue a "normal" life

of traditional routine, a way to manage the repressed pain, which, in turn, is perceived as torture by the son.

The narrator dreads the self-loathing family outings and regularly vomits in his father's newly purchased cars (20). Throwing up on his father's hard-earned trophies of the economic miracle creates a certain irony, disclosing the detachment between the narrator and his parents' world that is paralyzed by trauma and concealed by prosperity. Moreover, Treichel creates a satirist scenario in which the narrator unveils through his physical symptom of discomfort his parents' fear of turning the inside out. Instead of getting to the bottom of the cause of their child's discomfort (and their own), the parents leave him home alone. After a period of relief from the discomfort of accompanying his parents, he experiences a sense of "Beklemmungen und Verlassenheit" (oppressive anxiety [sense of loneliness/abandonment]) (23).[15] His parents enact emotional abandonment because his symptoms touch upon the issues they try to avoid.

The narrator's sense of emotional abandonment is also underlined by his father's assiduous pursuit of his meat business while his son's needs for parental attention and acknowledgement go unnoticed. After successfully running a grocery store, the father becomes interested in the meat industry and opens up a meat supply business, which grows steadily as West German meat consumption becomes a significant postwar status symbol. His father's business symbolizes the economic success and consumer society of West Germany in the 1950s, and it manifests in the text as the increasingly luxurious cars he purchases. As mentioned above, the 1950s car models along with the newly purchased television set are icons of the years of the German economic miracle (*Wirtschaftswunder*).

[15] Brown Janeway translates this expression as "oppressive anxiety," whereas "Verlassenheit" refers to the boys situation of emotional abandonment.

While his wife becomes increasingly passive and introverted in dealing with loss, the father's business is an escape from it:

> [d]er Vater dagegen büßte durch Arbeit. Je mehr die Mutter unter der Last der Erinnerung zu erstarren drohte, umso aktiver wurde der Vater [. . .]Hatte [der Vater] bisher jede Rücksicht auf die Mutter genommen und alles dafür getan, daß die Suche nach Arnold erfolgreich verlief, so mußte ich jetzt des öfteren erleben, wie er mit der Mutter in Streit geriet. Der Streit endete zumeist mit einem Wutanfall des Vaters, mit Gebrüll und Türenschlagen und immer wieder mit dem Satz 'Ich muß mich um das Geschäft kümmern!' (30, 54)
>
> (My father did his penance in work. The more my mother seemed liable to be paralyzed by the burden of memories, the busier my father became […] Until now [the father] had been considerate of my mother in every way and had done everything to try to make the search for Arnold successful, but now I often saw him getting into fights with my mother. The fight usually ended with my father having an attack of rage, yelling, slamming doors, and always finishing with the sentence "I have to take care of the business!").

These escapes into his business often end in high-effort investments that result in even further economic success. Again, not without a hint of irony, the father, a caricatured stereotypical German, portrays on one hand the German diligence of seeking penance in work. On the other hand, he shows balefully the postwar habit of burying the responsibility for and the traumas of the past in economic success. Opposing the official perspective of the economic success in West Germany in the 1950s as the expression of a new beginning, Treichel shows how the accumulation of wealth in the example of the narrator's father is, as most of the family's life, a repercussion of the traumatic past. He exemplifies how compulsive industriousness is a means of psychological numbing, to put it in Mitscherlich's terms, that not only inhibits the process of remorse and mourning but also blocks the emotional exchange with the family, and thus with his child.[16]

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[16] As Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich argue in their work *The Inability to Mourn*, Germany's defeat and Hitler's death meant for many Germans the loss of a sense of proud nationhood or untainted German culture. The loss is difficult to deal with because of the ambivalence of the libidinal relationship to Hitler and the state brought about by Germany's wartime role as a death machine for which generations to come would bear

The father also invests his amassed wealth as part of his escape from the past. His pleasure in heaps of cash and fancy cars, fetish items that distract from the family sorrows, contributes to the grotesque picture of his *Wirtschaftswunder* world. The images of prosperity are interestingly linked to death, and ultimately the father's own. His business of selling meat is based on death as a prerequisite, and the processing and distribution of his goods—perpetually repeating the fragmenting of the body all the way to its piece by piece consumption—spreads the sense of immanent slaughter and death. As a result of his steadily growing wealth, the father expands his business and invests in a large refrigerated warehouse: a symbol of his growing business that at the same time resembles a morgue. The accumulation of money is interwoven with death and its preservation.

The conflation of death and wealth gets further support in the father's stereotypically German habit of saving cash for purchasing his next new car. In a darkly comical situation, due to her frustration with her husband's focus on business and the lack of success in her search for her lost son, the mother grabs the mound of cash and throws it in the fire. Following an attempt to rescue some of it, the father saves the ashes of the money—now literally worthless—and pours it in a glass jar as if placing the ashes of a deceased loved one in an urn (46). Here money itself becomes a symbol of death but also a symbol of unbound energy and thus pure meaninglessness. Again, the father portrays a German caricature of the lust for power and authority. Yet it is a form of preemptive power which is symbolically unbound. The buildup of wealth in relationship to the trauma of the past suggests the desire

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responsibility. Due to this dilemma, the psyche, according to Mitscherlich, tries to avoid any libidinal investment in any relationship and remains in a numb state since any libidinal investment would bear the risk of giving in to either side of the dilemma. From a collective standpoint, the process of mourning seems to have been a path of continuous crisis within German postwar cultural discourse due to the collective responsibility for the atrocities committed during the climax of this libidinal relationship (compare chapter I of *The Inability to Mourn*).

to pay back a guilty debt or as a means of deferring the sense of responsibility by channeling the cathectic flux into an immense heap of cash or a large warehouse and holding it there. Ironically, these fetishist caches become themselves symbols of death and in this instance lead to the father's own death, as it is caused by a heart attack following the discovery of his robbed warehouse (85).

As most of the father's energy is channeled into his business, little is left for his living child who appears to be more burden than a reason for enjoying life. He sees in his son "nur den ungezogenen Jungen […], dem nichts so sehr fehlte, wie eine anständige Portion Hirn" (only the rude boy … [who] was lacking in … an adequate supply of brains), upon which comment he forces the child to eat pig brain (28, 38). Due to his stereotypical work ethic, he is bothered when he catches his son doing leisurely activities and interrupts them in order to put him to work (23). He shows little understanding for his son's psychosomatic ailment that expresses itself in stomach problems and facial twitches.

In a conversation about the search for the lost brother, Arnold, the narrator notices that his father speaks to him in an unusually gentle and familiar tone, which he usually only associates with his father talking to his clients. As the ominous family discourse surrounding Arnold causes distress in the narrator, he suffers from an onset of facial cramps during the conversation. Yet the father, oblivious to his child's psychological situation, accuses him of grinning as if he were ridiculing the serious problem (38). Subsequently, the tone of the conversation shifts from "dem freundlichen Kameraden- beziehungsweise Kundengespräch" (the companionbable conversation between friends or with a customer) to "das gewohnte Vater-Sohn-Gespräch" (the ususal father-son converstion), thus presumably distanced, cold, and dominated by the usual gloomy atmosphere in the family's life (38). Although

expressing the son's emotional distress, the facial twitches—described as involuntary grinning—caricature the father-son relationship similarly to the vomiting on the interior of the newly purchased car. Treichel interconnects the most tragic moments with a sense of irony and even humor, which creates a distance for reflection but at the same time underlines the direness of the particular situation.

Caricature and grotesquerie culminate in the family's pork feast, the only time when the constant notion of melancholia that the narrator senses in his social environment changes temporarily. The father expresses aesthetic and culinary pleasure with various parts of the animal. He describes the head of the pig as "ein besonders schöner Kopf" (particularly fine pig's head) that suggests an also beautiful and well proportioned complete pig (27). Equally special to the father is the pig blood "Schweineblut is Lebenssaft" (pig's blood is the sap of life) that he would have fed his baby son rather than milk if it had been up to him (28). The consumption of the pig brain, while disgusting to the narrator, is a special event for the father. Exclamations like "Hirn macht klug" (brains make you smart), reveal that it is part of the life-giving, exhilarating experience that he has with the butchered animal and that he is grotesquely delighted by its dismemberment (28). The father shares the delight about the slaughter with his fellow expellees. The father's exclamations satirically comment on the postwar *Wirtschaftswunder*-culture that both illuminates the German postwar appreciation for rich food—particularly meat—after the often-lamented years of starving, and alludes to the seemingly forgotten carnage of the war.

Similarly satirical is Treichel's conflation of the celebration of the pig slaughter and the father's and his contemporaries' nostalgia for their lost *Heimat* in Eastern Europe. Literally indulging in various parts of the slaughtered pig enlivens the father and his like-

minded friends (30). The conversation between the father and his guests, galvanized by consuming the pig brain, revolves itself around experiences of butchering. Of all things, beheaded rabbits and chickens running across the yard trigger fond *Heimatgefühle*, referring on one hand to the nostalgia revolving around the *Heimat* and the bucolic past, and on the other hand alluding to Hitler's blood-lands in Eastern Europe (30).[17] Although Treichel centralizes an event of German wartime experience in his novel, he criticizes here the discourse of German suffering revolving around the expulsion from Eastern territories in this satirical conflation of *Heimatgefühle* and carnage.

The narrator can't quite share his father's excitement about the pork feast and the butchering. He feels revulsion at the dead animal and the holiday as a whole and, reminiscent of his vomiting in his father's car, starts to gag when being forced to eat pig brain or drink the blood (30). While the father exults over the pig head, his son describes the "soeben erst vom Schwein abgetrennten, noch blutigen ... Schweinekopf" (the fresh [still bloody] pig's head [fresh meaning just severed from the pig]) with a sense of disgust (28). He associates the blood with the tortuous process of dying that he witnessed once at his father's client's farm (28). He describes the pig's screaming while bleeding to death that still causes nightmares (29). Similarly to his marginalized role in the family album, the narrator cannot participate in the only family delight. Outside the parents' averted gaze, the narrator lacks presence in his parents' internal life. Yet, the narrator's revulsion at the pig slaughter and pork feast indicates a stark interruption of the legacy of bucolic life tainted by the war.

The narrator develops an increasing repulsion for everything familial after his realization that the bond with his mother is compromised by the loss of his brother. When the mother embraces him, he senses that the hug is not actually meant for him, but that he is

[17] Nostalgic feelings for the *Heimat* (home/homeland).

simply a surrogate for his brother (38). So he feels revolted by his mother's embrace, like his reaction to the family outings, and to eating pig brain. The narrator continues what his parents started: excluding and rejecting his parents' life and thus voluntarily reiterating his exclusion.

Yet, as the parents initiate the search operations for their lost firstborn, the narrator receives a new role in the family dynamic. He gains importance in his parents' mental life as he becomes some kind of model for the anatomic criteria that are supposed to narrow down the number of potential "candidates" among German orphans having lost their parents during the flight from Russia (38). The search for Arnold culminates in the visit at the forensic anthropological laboratories at the university in Heidelberg. Here the narrator and his parents undergo a body examination that is supposed to clarify whether a certain orphan (*Findelkind 2307*; foundling 2307) is the parents' lost son. This visit is another symptom of fetishism similar to the family photo album. It is also a symptom of residual Nazi ideology and violence.

The measurement of certain body parts with the goal to find out about a blood relationship between the orphan and the narrator's family is, as Eshel points out, an allusion to Nazi race theory ("Die Grammatik der Verlusts" 72). Not only does Treichel emphasize the ideological aspect of the examination by indicating the randomness of the method, but he does it in his accustomed satirical manner. The father appears to have oddly-shaped feet, revealing him as a quite comical figure, yet only the print of one of them is being used to determine a potential relationship to the orphan. In the end, the results of that examination are so vague that they can be interpreted in either direction: related or not related, depending on the observer's ideological mindset or, in this case, the emotional state of the mother (57).

In the case of the examination, it is the family who become quasi-victims, especially the narrator who is least invested in the purpose of the examination. He describes a sense of humiliation, states of anxiety in which he breaks out sweating, and pain caused by the forceps squeezing his abdomen and jaws (71). These examination processes allude to Nazi methodology in terms of using visible anatomic characteristics as parameters for determining belonging and acceptance and are reminiscent of the evaluation of labor and death camp prisoners that determined their bodies' usefulness. Once again the narrator is victimized by the historical baggage of his parents and their postwar culture. He feels left out in his family life but simultaneously rejects it and the culture by which it is influenced.

Although the father plays an authoritative role in the family's life, the mother plays an influential role in the family as well. Burning the family's cash is not only symbolically powerful but it is a substantial intervention in the direction of the family life. Moreover, it serves the purpose of drawing attention to her needs and initiates the continuous and elaborate search operations for her son. In addition, the mother has the ability not only to make the family life revolve around them but to perpetuate the search operations indefinitely. While serving as a model in order to help determine a potential blood relationship between the orphan and the family during the search for the brother, the narrator also becomes a means to continue the mother's fetishist way of dealing with her loss. Like the photo album, the search operation represents her loss while simultaneously offering something to hold onto in order to avoid dealing with it. The meaningless results from the anatomic examination can keep up her hopes, depending on how she interprets them. Interestingly, some body parts connect the narrator's family more closely with the orphan than others, especially those of her second son (57). Consequently, the body parts that suggest a mismatch avert her view

and redirect it onto those that keep up her hopes up. The narrator's role in the search for Arnold therefore resembles a spare parts collection from which the mother takes what she needs to adjust her current fetishist view. At the end of the search, a face-to-face meeting is arranged with the young man thought to be Arnold. The police officer Mr. Rudolph (now the mother's husband whom she married after the father's death), the narrator, and his mother pull up at the shop where the orphan works. The narrator is able to see the young man and is struck by the resemblance between himself and the orphan (106). Yet the mother requests to leave without even getting out of the car. She chooses the state of not knowing over clarity, her decision to turn around without having achieved anything expressing her fear of losing her fetishized lost son.

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The narrator's parents' fetishist way of dealing with their traumatic past causes the young boy to grow up in an emotionally neglecting environment. The narrator, although constantly affected by his parents' trauma, is regularly excluded from their focus of attention. The father invests his cathectic energies in his business to avoid the pain associated with past events. The mother is obsessed with perpetuating the search for her firstborn son as seen in her deliberate decision to avoid results. The father's compulsive attention to his meat business and of the mother's search makes them emotionally numb toward their second son. Yet almost every aspect of the parents' obsessions bespeaks in one way or another carnage and death of the past, and thus an opening to pass on the trauma to the emotionally abandoned son.

The parents' own trauma of losing their firstborn, the mother's victimization by Russian soldiers, and the loss of their home in the eastern territories is placed in the center of

their post-traumatic, postwar family life. Yet it becomes evident that the parents are part of a larger context; they are representatives of postwar West German society as a whole, as the father's business and their buildup of wealth intersect with paramount stereotypes of the so-called *Wirtschaftswunderjahre*. Considering the parents' symbolic position, their bereavement suggests an overshadowing and intersecting of the trauma of a more extensive loss: the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Within the web of trauma and guilt, Treichel creates a more complex parent–child relationship between the war generation and the second generation that is less black-and-white than its portrayal in the *Väterliteratur*, yet not less problematic. The parents' preoccupation with the loss is portrayed as an additional moment in the parent–child relationship that drives the child away from his parents because he cannot relate to his parents' war experiences. However, the son's detachment follows a sense of letting-go of the parents rather than hostility and aggression.

Treichel's use of the abandoned child illuminates several aspects significant to *Der Verlorene*: Treichel juxtaposes the effects of German wartime suffering and responsibility, which creates a tension-laden and difficult childhood situation deficient in nurturing and loving attention. The familial network of conflict emphasizes trauma's continuous impact on following generations, yet as the experiences involved are contextualized within a broader spectrum of perspectives, Treichel offers a tendency toward gradual emotional detachment as seen in the text's sometimes subtle but also overt use of irony.

These two main aspects, the broadening of perspectives and the development toward emotional departure in the ironic approach to the issue get further worked through in Treichel's *Menschenflug* and *Anatolin*. In both novels Treichel addresses a very similar war

experience of the protagonist's parents losing their firstborn son during their flight from the eastern territories. However, the family constellation varies slightly between all texts. Also, the narrative perspective of the two later novels is situated in the 2000s, and thus the protagonist—the younger son—looks at the event from an adult perspective.

In *Menschenflug*, the younger son, Stefan, described in the third person, just published a text resembling *Der Verlorene* as an attempt to come to terms with the parents' longtime, and recently revealed, secret of the lost son. The novel tries to find a place for this past event in the post-*Wende* situation of the family, in which the children deal with their own separate lives. Yet the siblings decide not to resume the mother's search efforts due to the risk of losing part of her inheritance, to which the lost brother would be partially entitled (202-208). Moreover, the man who could potentially be *Findelkind 2307* turns out to be aggressive and hostile in an encounter with Stefan in which Stefan does not identify himself (217-18). Consequently, Stefan wants nothing to do with him and quits his search endeavors.

What is still an all-encompassing trauma and the emotional focus of the parents in *Der Verlorene* is, in *Menschenflug,* an event of long ago, which, although still permeating the protagonist's life, takes its place among other equally important issues in the adult life of the younger son and his siblings. The immediate pain over the event of losing the son—a situation now recontextualized within the post-*Wende* circumstances of the family—has gone with the demise of the parents. The children do not share the emotional attachment to the lost brother whom none of them ever knew, but rather face the situation with pragmatism and sobriety. The collapsed time between *Der Verlorene* and *Menschenflug* emphasizes the moment of departure toward increased contextualization, the inclusion of multiple perspectives, and space for reflection.

The movement toward space for reflection finds its climax in *Anatolin*. As the younger son—here, again, a nameless first-person narrator—travels to his mother's place of birth in Poland, the entire journey serves as a purpose to reflect on the past, his childhood, his parents, the lost brother, and their former home in the eastern territories. These reflections are interlaced with the present post-Cold War circumstances of the journey, offering even broader space for reflection. The narrator claims to have written a novel like *Der Verlorene* and *Menschenflug* as well, revealing the strong self-reflexive nature of the two novels. In *Anatolin* the younger son shows another attempt to get to the bottom of the parents' wartime trauma, involving visits to his parents' places of birth in the Ukraine and Poland and the search for *Findelkind 2307*. The futile search is imbedded in the narrator's far-reaching reflection and retrospection about his life and his parents' life—particularly his problematic relationship with his father—and the two texts he has written.

In their self-reflexive style, Treichel's later two novels establish a tension between a consistent desire to resolve the enduring traces of trauma and a desire to show the ever changing nature of memory and perspectives of the past over the course of time and its changing generational and political contexts. While all three texts show a continuity in regard to the protagonist's sense of abandonment that remains to be grappled with, the past changes ever so slightly and thus can never be fully be grasped.

W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*

Literary scholar and writer W. G. Sebald, born in 1944 in Wertach, Germany, lived most of his adult life in England. His prose, often influenced by autobiographical aspects, revolves around themes of loss, victimization, memory, and the melancholy that they bring

about. All of his novels deal with these themes in relationship with the history of the 20th century in general and with the Holocaust in particular. While the Holocaust plays a rather indirect role in *Schwindel: Gefühle* (1990; *Vertigo*, 1999) and *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt* (1995; *The Rings of Saturn*, 1998), the novels *Die Ausgewanderten: Vier lange Erzählungen* (1992; *The Emigrants*, 1996) and *Austerlitz* (2001) focus on biographical experiences of the Holocaust and World War II. Yet in *Austerlitz*, Sebald's last novel, he weaves these themes for the first time around the fate of a Jewish child victim. I shall examine the motif of the abandoned child in *Austerlitz* not only as a *topos* of trauma, forgetting, and remembering that serves as a powerful identificatory and thus commemorative device, but, against the background of other texts by Sebald, also as a symptom of a struggling German postwar experience.

The starting point of the main narrative is the protagonist's 1939 evacuation at the age of four with one of the so-called *kindertransports* from the Eastern European deportation areas. Jacques Austerlitz—a Czech Jew—is forced to leave his family and his hometown with no certainty of returning. This departure—an event so closely related to the Holocaust—is a key event in Austerlitz's life around which the rest of the narrative revolves. Like Wenders and Treichel, Sebald anchors the experience of the abandoned child within immediate war circumstances. Similarly to *Der Verlorene*, the abandoned child is represented by a male within the strongly implemented ties of the nuclear family which provide a dominant structure to the narrative.

Yet, in contrast to Wenders and Treichel, Sebald's focus is not on the German experience of abandonment but a Jewish child victim, Jacques Austerlitz, yet told from the perspective of a German friend. Sebald addresses the theme of the abandoned child firstly

within the context of postwar, post-Holocaust cultural memory, but transcends that specific historical context by turning the motif into a representative of a globalized problem of modernity. In descriptive and detail-oriented prose, resembling at times a travelogue, mixing facts and fiction in long, interlaced, but nonetheless fluid sentences with photographic images inserted into the text, Sebald embeds the specific experience of abandonment related to the Holocaust within the melancholic atmosphere of modern Western history of bellicosity, oppression, and destruction. Within this greater context, he establishes a framework that allows the connection between fictional Jewish and German postwar situations that mirror each other in a troubling way.

Austerlitz's story comes to life through the writing of the narrator, a German intellectual whom Austerlitz meets during his travels. They meet each other for the first time in Belgium, 1967, and from here on the narrator meets with Austerlitz repeatedly, whether mysteriously by chance or by visiting Austerlitz at his university office in London. These encounters mostly include conversation about the history of European architecture paralleled with pieces of Austerlitz's personal history. The relationship between Austerlitz and the narrator spans the thirty years between 1967 and 1997 and is significantly structured by the narrator's temporary move from England to Germany and the fall of the Iron Curtain. During these thirty years, Austerlitz reveals his personal story through the narrator in nonlinear fragments.

After being sent on one of the *kindertransports* to England, Austerlitz grows up in Wales in the home of a Calvinist preacher and his wife. His adopted parents do not reveal his origin to him, nor do they nurture his heritage. Austerlitz seems to have buried in his unconscious the memory of his Jewish family in Prague, and his foster parents die before

Austerlitz can, or is ready to, learn where he came from. Yet during his adolescent and adult life, Austerlitz discovers his origin and the identity of his birth parents piece by piece. Contemporaneously to the ending of Perestroika and the opening of the borders to Eastern Europe, Austerlitz experiences a revealing moment at the Liverpool Street Station: he remembers his arrival in London, which generates a succession of disclosures about the circumstances surrounding his evacuation and his Czech origin. The open borders allow him to travel to Prague where he finds his former nanny Věra. In conversation with her, Austerlitz learns about his family history and the persecution and victimization of his parents by the Nazis. The traces of his mother's deportation lead Austerlitz to Terezín, to the *Theresienstadt* concentration camp. Yet the traces disappear here, and Austerlitz decides to search for his father who was involved in a resistance group, and whose traces lead Austerlitz to Paris. Austerlitz stays in Paris, hoping to meet up with an old friend. During one of Austerlitz's last meetings with the narrator in the novel, Austerlitz hands his London apartment keys to the narrator, inviting him to reside at his apartment as he pleases.

While Austerlitz appears to tell the narrator much from his personal life, actual personal dialogue between Austerlitz and the narrator is rare. Thus the narrator's personal life remains in the background. Yet he makes a few obscure comments within the context of visiting Breendonk fortress, a Belgian military protection complex, which was later used by the Gestapo to detain, torture, and kill dissidents. These comments reveal an association between the torture at the fort and the narrator's German childhood and his father. Yet the association remains vague and does not receive further elaboration.

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Scholarly writing about Sebald's work, particularly *Austerlitz*, has been abundant. Many of these voices analyze the texts regarding its ethical role in German postwar cultural memory. Lynn Wolff argues in *H.G. Adler and W.G. Sebald: From History and Literature to Literature as Historiography* (2011) that Sebald writes

> in such a way that demands the reader's critical engagement, not only with the literary text itself but especially with the contentious past at the center of these texts, namely the Holocaust, reveals the ethical dimension and imperative of Sebald's oeuvre. (263)

Lewis Ward shares in *A Simultaneous Gesture of Proximity and Distance: W.G. Sebald's Empathic Narrative Persona* (2012) Lynn's view of an ethically sound and empathetic approach in Sebald's *Austerlitz*:

> Sebald's works constitute precisely "mixed or hybridized genres" in that they combine fiction, (auto-) biography and history, and, moreover, include the element of reflexivity that as we have seen is crucial to a productive notion of empathy. Indeed, these texts actively foreground their engagement with the problems of how to approach the past by inserting a version of the author into the narrative ("playing different roles"). Thus the key to Sebald's balanced empathic posture is his first-person narrator, a figure with some biographical correspondence to the author who enters the world of the fiction and takes part in the action. (3)

While these two scholars belong to a group portraying Sebald's work as a sophisticated and appropriate way of commemorating, Peter Morgan underlines in *"Your Story is Now My Story": The Ethics of Narration in Grass and Sebald* (2009) ethical issues of Sebald's narrators in general:

> The desire to give back the stories of his interlocutors is double-edged: it is also a taking away of their stories, a re-presentation through his own unmistakable narrative voice, and a redemption of himself as well as of the genuine victims of Auschwitz….It is not Sebald's narrative details which are problematic, but rather the status of the observer himself, who so clearly merges self and other, past and present, victim and perpetrator, memory and history. Sebald cannot be a moral witness. He did not experience the events through which he longs to identify himself, and his suffering is very different from that of his interlocutors. (103)

In Morgan's view, Sebald's narrator constantly transgresses the ethical framework surrounding the victims' experience by attempting to appropriate other people's experiences as his memory work.

Less indicting but similarly critical is Katra Byrum's chapter on *Austerlitz* in her 2015 book *Ethics and the Dynamic Observer Narrator*. Herein Byrum focuses on the narrator as "key to the work, not only as the teller of Austerlitz's story but also as a historical figure with a story of his own" (192). Byrum argues that "the text presents the narrator's behavior and his relationship to Austerlitz as structured by psychological trauma," which is the trauma of the "unrecognized victim of the past that haunts Austerlitz" (192, 217). Byrum refers to Sebald's 1997 lecture *On the Natural History of Destruction* where he claims that postwar German literature has inadequately or insufficiently addressed German suffering under the allied aerial warfare:

> The novel [*Austerlitz*], like the lecture [*On the Natural History of Destruction*]… argues that Germans must be able to tell the story of their own suffering if they are to be able to come to terms with the past…Yet the paradigms of Holocaust representation dictate that their stories be subordinated, even silenced, in favor of the victims' stories. (217)

Like Byrum, I argue that the allusions to the narrator's own past refer to a troubled German self that resonates strongly with Sebald's claims in *On the Natural History of Destruction*. Yet my analysis will go a step further than seeing in *Austerlitz*'s narrator a traumatized self, whose story is oppressed by the victim's story. I argue that Sebald reflects in *Austerlitz* the motif of the *German* postwar abandoned child in the few references to the narrator's own life but also mirrored in Austerlitz's story of childhood abandonment. The link between Sebald's lecture and *Austerlitz* is precisely the motif of the German postwar abandoned child, who, as I will show, has been abandoned, as many of the German second generation claim, in a space

of painful muteness by the parents' generation. As Sebald's texts reveal, the silencing of the German war generation includes the repression of the commemoration of Germany's victims and an unambiguous acknowledgement of German atrocities as well as the war-related suffering Germans went through. Since his postwar German childhood felt abandoned in this space of muteness, Sebald feels compelled to fill this space with narrative that gives voice to both subjects of silencing: Germany's victims and German suffering.

Unlike many peer voices in the genre of *Väterliteratur*, addressing their parents' role in the war and in the family with self-righteous reproach, Sebald's writing reads as an attempt to compensate the silence and thus as a gesture of responsibility in the true sense of the word: the silence makes him feel compelled to respond. Yet in doing so, he does not escape the question about the ethical appropriateness of his approach.

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When Austerlitz's mother Agáta decides to send her son on one of the *kindertransports* to London in early 1939 because of the increasing violence against Jews in Prague, she saves her son's life. Yet Austerlitz is left alone at the age of four, traveling internationally without any certainty about his destination or return home. Having to abandon her child breaks Agáta's heart, as the old nanny Věra recalls, and leaves her in a secluded state of melancholia (Sebald 250). In Austerlitz's own memory of the train journey on the *Kindertransport*, the German landscape represents the threatening and unfathomable entrance into the unknown: "[ein] von einem grenzen- und namenlosen, gänzlich von finsteren Waldungen überwachsene[s] Land, das ich durchqueren mußte, ohne zu wissen wohin" (a nameless land without borders and entirely overgrown by dark forests, which I had to cross without any idea where I was going [translation, including all following translations of

Sebald's texts, by Anthea Bell]) (320). Of course, being the *German* landscape, these dark forests also represent the imminent threat of the global catastrophe of war and genocide. These images of threatening landscapes also accompany Austerlitz in his childhood in Wales. Austerlitz's feeling of abandonment on the train trip culminates in his obsessive memory of another young child so terrified by being sent off alone that he sits motionless in the corner of the train cabin. Later, recalls Austerlitz, they find this boy's emaciated lifeless body in the baggage net (320-321). The boy's tragic fate underscores these children's extraordinary situation. Although technically being saved, they are faced with one of the most horrific experiences for a young child: being indefinitely separated from their parents and loved ones and exposed to uncertainty. That uncertainty leaves even their parents emotionally shattered. Moreover, when read in the doubled structure in which Sebald constitutes the figure of the child, this child's death on the train alludes to the thousands of deportees who died under the inhumane conditions in the cattle cars, part of the killing machine, as well as the millions of child victims of the death camps.

Even after meeting his foster parents in Wales, Austerlitz's sense of abandonment remains. He continues to sense the threatening darkness spawned by the German forests and river canyons in the landscape of Wales; the preacher's home is cold, dark, and too large, its curtains drawn, and many of its rooms permanently locked. These features make this house an uninviting place (65). As part of his arrival in Wales, Austerlitz recollects "neue Kleider, die [ihn] sehr unglücklich machten … auch … das unerklärliche Verschwinden [seines] grünen Rucksäckchens" (new clothes which made me very unhappy, and the inexplicable disappearance of [his] little green rucksack] (198-9). He loses the last remnants of his mother and his life in Prague. Through the Welsh couple's taking away Austerlitz's clothes

and his backpack upon arrival, Sebald again alludes to the Holocaust, and more specifically to an arrival at a concentration camp (199). Moreover, Austerlitz describes how his language and memory "die," and that he remembers these as "[ein] leiserwerdende[s] Rumoren … wie eine Art Scharren oder Pochen von etwas Eingesperrtem" (the faltering and fading sounds … like something shut up and scratching or knowing), thus evoking in the reader the image of camp victims trapped in gas chambers or cattle cars (199). In addition to the physical lack of warmth in the preacher's home, Austerlitz describes the social atmosphere as cold; the foster parents talk very little with each other, or with Austerlitz. They choose a new name for him that it pains Austerlitz to be called (69). Beginning with this new name, Austerlitz's foster parents begin erasing his early memory by simple neglect. Moreover, the doctrines of Calvinism infuse their lives, and its strictness in a remote Welsh village would inevitably cause culture shock in a boy used to Prague's vibrant urban life and his highly educated and worldly parents.

During his childhood in Wales, Austerlitz accompanies his foster father around the country on a sermon tour of alternating villages in the region. On one of these trips, Elias, the foster father, tells Austerlitz about his home town Llanwddyn, which they pass. Austerlitz sympathizes with the residents of Llanwddyn, whose village had to give way to the building of a dam (74). In his child's mind, Austerlitz assumes that the inhabitants, except for Elias, were flooded as well and live in their village under water: "Ich [wähnte] die anderen alle … drunten in der Tiefe noch ..., wo sie weiterhin in ihren Häusern noch saßen und auf der Gasse herumgingen, aber ohne sprechen zu können und mit viel zu weit offenen Augen" (I imagined all the others ... still down in the depth, sitting in their houses and walking along the road, but unable to speak and with their eyes open far too wide) (76). The text manifests

the twofold figure of the abandoned child: what on one level appears as a child's imagination of people "living" under water with fish-like eyes in order to see in the depths, at the same time on a subliminal level alludes to the physical symptoms of starving prisoners. Elias shows Austerlitz pictures of Llanwddyn and his family, which Austerlitz examines "bis die Personen, die mir aus ihnen entgegensahen … so vertraut wurden, als lebte ich bei ihnen auf dem Grund des Sees" (until the people looking out of them ... became as familiar to me as if I were living with them down at the bottom of the lake) (77-8). The expressions that the photographed people make underscore Austerlitz's assumption of their having been left behind, abandoned under water. As the Welsh pronunciation of Llanwddyn ([ɬɔnwʊðɪn]) is assonant to *one within*, the reader can interpret Austerlitz's image of the underwater Llanwddyn as the repressed world *within* himself, especially since we notice a strong parallel between this idea and his own emotions from being left behind, subdued, in a dark and cold, disconnected place.[18] Allusions to camp victims, like the lost bag and clothing and lost language, connect Austerlitz through his solitude, his abandonment in Wales, to the victims of the concentration camps, abandoned by humanity.

Abandonment in Austerlitz's Welsh childhood culminates in a symbolic moment as Austerlitz describes his fascination with and fear of Moses' similar abandonment story:

> Ich sehe noch … wie ich, *beschwörerisch* vor mich hinmurmelnd, *immer wieder von neuem* die Geschichte von Moses herausbuchstabierte … und ich weiß wieder, wie sehr ich mich damals ängstigte bei der Stelle, an der davon die Rede war, daß die Tochter Levi ein Kästlein machte...und daß sie sodann in dieses Kästlein das Kindlein hineinlegte und es aussetzte in dem Schilf am Ufer des Wassers (80-1) [emphasis mine].
>
> (I can still see myself … muttering *intently* and spelling out the story of Moses *again and again*…I have only to turn a couple of pages of that book … to remember how anxious I felt at the time when I read the tale of the daughter of Levi, who made an ark of bulrushes … placed the child in the ark and laid it among the reeds by the side

[18] See Gary King's *Modern Welsh Dictionary*, "Guide to Pronunciation" (x).

of the water).

Austerlitz reads the story in an evocative manner, as if attempting to stir up his own repressed abandonment. He reads the story over and over again, as if following a compulsion from his being left alone that ties him, frightened and fascinated at the same time, to the story of Moses. With the analogy to the story of Moses set adrift on the Nile to save his life from the rage of the Pharaoh, Sebald elevates Austerlitz's individual fate of abandonment to a nearly messianic level. The motif of the abandoned child, a transgenerational vessel of trauma, turns here into a transhistorical, transethnical memorial. Thus Austerlitz's story of abandonment might be read as a gateway narrative to a much more expansive, pan-historical and pan–geographical network of narratives of abandonment. Sebald implicitly connects Austerlitz's trauma to Cathy Caruth's interpretation of Freud's assessment of the Exodus in *Moses and Monotheism* which she views in *Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) as an example of structural trauma being the basis of narrative, religion, and history.[19] What for Freud is the Exodus and the murder of Moses, is in *Austerlitz* the *abandoned child*: the perpetuating unspeakable that historiography tries to fill. The reader can also interpret Austerlitz's evocative murmuring as resembling an oracle less directed at his own individual past than at the perpetual connection between trauma and history, which Sebald associates particularly with the development of modernity.

In his 2006 book *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald,* Eric Santner provides

[19] In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud claims that Moses was an Egyptian and possibly a follower of the monotheistic pharaoh *Akhenaton*. Freud follows that since monotheist believers were persecuted in Egypt and Akhenaton killed, Moses left Egypt with his followers. According to Freud's hypothesis, Moses was killed by his own people in the wake of a rebellion. The people conjoined another monotheistic tribe in Midian who worshipped a volcanic god. Moses' followers started regretting killing their leader and introduced the hope of his return in the idea of the Messiah in their process of mourning. Freud claims that the passing on of the sense of guilt and hope for the Messiah then constituted Judaism, and set the basis for all Abrahamic religions. Cathy Caruth integrates Freud's assessment in *Unclaimed Experience* by theorizing that, following religion, historiography itself is a successor of religion following likewise the principle of the return of the repressed rather than a simple structure of experience and reference.

a comprehensive commentary on Sebald's way of embedding his narratives (Austerlitz's story) within the greater impact of the Holocaust, and the latter, in turn, within the signifying system of modernity. Santner investigates the aspect of marginalization and the stories of those left behind by modernity by drawing on Walter Benjamin, Giorgio Agamben, and others. From this context he creates the concept of *creaturely* life, which emerges at the moment of the suspension of the law, at the instance when the "master discourse" claims the "lawless law" to maintain ultimate power (29). Santner detects a form of sensitivity in Sebald's writing toward the accumulative manifestation of suffering in the setting of our social, political, and historical environment caused by the exertion of power on those abandoned by the sovereign law (58).

Austerlitz's abandonment or displacement fits the moment of creaturely life's emergence in two ways. Borrowing from Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, Santner establishes the separation between the "creature" on one side and man on the other. The former lives in a realm that Santner calls the "borderless surround" (in Rilke's/Agamben's terms, "the Open"), but "man, instead, is condemned to the ceaseless production of mediating representations;" he is always embedded in the laws of language and meaning—that is, in the symbolic order. The "creature" includes animal, angel, and (partially) child (3). In one possible reading, the child leaves the realm of the "borderless surround" under the guidance of continuously infiltrating meaning, starting with his immediate familial environment. Thus Austerlitz resides in the borderless surround temporarily in the first place by simply being a child. Secondly, Austerlitz's abandonment exemplifies the concept of the creaturely. His evacuation is caused by the intervention of the sovereign law (the takeover and invasion of the Nazi regime), being life-threatening to the European Jew. This takeover suspends his

social environment's newly emerged world of meaning. As a young child still in a borderland to language, he is cast into a space akin to the borderless surround where he is forced to give up everything that has made sense to him so far, including his language.

Although Austerlitz manages to live for the most part a "sane" life with a productive role in society as a scholar of the history of architecture, part of him appears to be left behind in the borderless surround, which reemerges both as blurry moments of supernatural encounter with what might be read as the realm of the dead as well as moments of murmur, loss of language, and speechlessness culminating in the mental breakdowns Austerlitz experiences at key moments of his life. Austerlitz travels through Europe driven by his affinity to urban and ruinous edifices. His often nocturnal peripatetic habit is a journey through the borderless surround, since the places along his travels—ruins, fortresses, and railway stations—suggest to him the presence of forgotten souls. In moments of physical or mental weakness Austerlitz perceives "durch eine Art von treibendem Rauch oder Schleier hindurch Farben und Formen von einer sozusagen verminderten Körperlichkeit...Bilder aus einer verblichenen Welt" (what might be described as shapes and colors of diminished corporeality through a drifting veil or cloud of smoke, images from a faded world) (182). He senses how someone pulls his sleeve or he hears "wie hinter [seinem] Rücken über [ihn] geredet wurde in einer fremden Sprache" (people behind my back speaking in a foreign tongue) (184). Austerlitz perceives the borderless surround and is, to a degree, part of it as he hears its inhabitants talk about him and touch him.

One of these sensitive moments toward the unwritten history of an urban edifice—the Liverpool Street Station—turns out to be key to Austerlitz's path of self-discovery and reveals that his peripatetic habit of visiting railroad stations is a form of the return of the

repressed. In Austerlitz's perception, the space stops behaving according to the laws of physics and transforms into what one could perceive as a borderless surround:

> [J]e länger ich … in die Höhe hinaufstarrte, desto mehr kam es mir vor, als dehnte sich der Innenraum [of the Ladies Waitingroom], als setzte er in der unwahrscheinlichsten perspektivischen Verkürzung unendlich sich fort und beugte sich sogleich, wie das nur in einem...falschen Universum möglich war, in sich selbst zurück. (194-95)
>
> (and the longer I stared upward … the more I felt as if the room where I stood were expanding, going on for ever and ever in an improbably foreshortened perspective, at the same time turning back into itself in a way possible only in such a deranged universe).

It is here, in the obsolete area, destined to be torn down, of the Liverpool Street Station known as the Ladies Waiting Room, where Austerlitz remembers his arrival as a young Jewish boy in London. His memory reveals the moment in which his Welsh foster parents receive him at the Liverpool Street Station:

> Tatsächlich hatte ich das Gefühl...als enthalte der Wartesaal, in dessen Mitte ich wie ein Geblendeter stand, alle Stunden meiner Vergangenheit, all meine von jeher unterdrückten, ausgelöschten Ängste und Wünsche, als sei das schwarzweiße Rautenmuster der Steinplatten zu meinen Füßen das Feld für das Endspiel meines Lebens, als erstrecke es sich über die gesamte Ebene der Zeit. Vielleicht sah ich darum auch in dem Halbdämmer des Saals zwei im Stil der dreißiger Jahre gekleidete Personen mittleren Alters, eine Frau in einem leichten Garbadinemantel mit einem schief auf ihrer Haarfrisur sitzenden Hut und neben ihr einen hageren Herrn, der einen dunklen Anzug und einen Priesterkragen um den Hals trug. Ja, und nicht nur den Priester sah ich und seine Frau..., sondern ich sah auch den Knaben, den abzuholen sie gekommen waren ... So erkannte ich ihn, des Rucksäckchens wegen, und erinnerte mich zum erstenmal, soweit ich zurückdenken konnte, an mich selber in dem Augenblick, in dem ich begriff, daß es in diesem Wartesaal gewesen sein mußte, daß ich in England angelangt war vor mehr als einem halben Jahrhundert. (196-97)
>
> (In fact I felt … that the waiting room where I stood as if dazzled contained all the hours of my past life, all the suppressed and extinguished fears and wishes I had ever entertained, as if the black and white diamond of the stone slabs beneath my feet were the board on which the endgame would be played, and it covered the entire plane of time. Perhaps that is why, in the gloomy light of the waiting room, I also saw two middle-aged people dressed in the style of the thirties, a woman in a light gabardine coat with a hat at an angle on her head, and a thin man beside her wearing a dark suit and a dog collar. And I not only saw the minister and his wife … I also saw the boy

> they had come to meet. He was sitting by himself on a bench over to one side. His legs, in white knee-length socks, did not reach the floor, and but for the small rucksack he was holding on his lap I don't think I would have known him … As it was, I recognized him by the rucksack of his, and for the first time in as far as I can remember I recollected myself as a small child, at the moment when I realized that it must have been to this same waiting room I had come on my arrival in England over half a century ago).

This moment is a key to understanding Austerlitz and the early years of his childhood, his parents' fate, and his historical heritage. The revelation at the Liverpool Street Station is a gateway moment that leads Austerlitz to his lost memory, his origin, his identity, and therefore to reconnecting with his lost mother. Austerlitz enters the Ladies Waiting Room with a feeling of entering a stage through the side curtain:

> [K]aum hatte ich meine Hand auf den Messingknauf gelegt, da trat ich schon, durch einen gegen die Zugluft aufgehängten Filzvorhang, in den offenbar vor Jahren bereits außer Gebrauch geratenen Saal, so wie ein Schauspieler ... der auf die Bühne hinaustritt. (193)

> ([B]ut as soon as I had taken hold of the brass handle I stepped past a heavy curtain hung on the inside to keep out drafts, and entered the large room, which had obviously been disused for years. I felt … like an actor … making his entrance …).

In his perception, the waiting room transforms into a space, as Austerlitz finds out later, that is closely associated with his mother's professional life. Thus up to this point railroad stations function in Austerlitz's life as what Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok termed a *crypt*, an incorporated or *abandoned* loss or secret, which resists nonpathological mourning by being too shameful to be named: "Inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject" that contains along with the trauma "[t]he words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed" (*The Shell and the Kernel* 130). At this moment, Austerlitz seems to be breaking the walls of his crypt as he is mimetically approaching his forgotten mother. The Ladies Waiting Room describes Austerlitz's mother as the lady *waiting* to be released from her space of oblivion. The moment of release of

memory at the Liverpool Street Station is subsequently followed by Austerlitz's journey to Prague where he finds his former nurse Věra, and through whom he receives much more detailed and quite intimate information about his childhood in Prague and his parents.

Yet remembering something that was impossible to mourn to begin with is still painful when reaccessed. The revelation about his arrival in London at the Liverpool Street Station does not only, if at all, provide a sense of relief in Austerlitz:

> Den Zustand, in den ich darüber geriet, … weiß ich, wie so vieles nicht genau zu beschreiben; es war ein Reißen, das ich in mir verspürte, und Scham und Kummer, oder ganz etwas anderes, worüber man nicht reden kann, weil dafür die Worte fehlen, so wie mir die Worte damals gefehlt haben, als die zwei fremden Leute auf mich zutraten, deren Sprache ich nicht verstand. Ich entsinne mich nur, daß mir, indem ich den Knaben auf der Bank sitzen sah, durch eine dumpfe Benommenheit hindurch die Zerstörung bewußt wurde, die das Verlassensein in mir angerichtet hatte im Verlauf der vielen vergangenen Jahre .... (197-8)
>
> (As so often…I cannot give any precise description of the state of mind this realization induced; I felt something rending within me, and a sense of shame and sorrow, or perhaps something quite different, something inexpressible because we have no words for it, just as I had no words all those years ago when the two strangers came over to me speaking a language I did not understand. All I do know is when I saw the boy sitting on the bench I became aware, through my dull bemusement, of the destructive effect on me of my desolation through all those past years …).

On one hand, Austerlitz breaks a state of numbness and silence caused by the repression of his evacuation. Yet the realization of this event causes another emotion, which he, at first, cannot put in words but for which he then gains some sort of awareness. Sebald illustrates here how the Ladies Waiting Room initiated gradual mourning, which reveals not only further pain upon discovery but also ways of expressing that pain.

However, with his rediscovery of his childhood trauma, Austerlitz's state of abandonment is repeatedly reinforced during his journey to unveil life-changing insight about his past. As he comes to Prague, it is not his mother but his *nurse* that he finds: her role inherently signals the absence of his mother. Although she reconnects Austerlitz's memory to

his origin, to his family history and thus his mother, and identifies the photograph of his mother that Austerlitz finds at the theatre archives in Prague, she also stands for Austerlitz's encounter with his mother's pain and suffering, her deportation and disappearing. She both reveals and stands for the abandonment and loss of his mother. This revelation of the fate of his mother after his evacuation denotes a "second" loss of his mother.

Věra tells Austerlitz about the confiscation of the family's belongings and the clearing and fumigation of their apartment following his mother's eviction, which in its sequence of events refers, in typical Sebaldian fashion of implication, to his parents' deportation and death (259). She pulls out a photograph of Austerlitz as a young boy. The caption of the photograph refers to Ludwig Bechstein's fairytale *The Rose Queen*, which features a young prince mourning the loss of his mother. The small photograph depicting Austerlitz at about the same age of his evacuation has "survived" the Nazi's eradication of this Jewish family just like Austerlitz in person, as it had been *abandoned* between the pages of Věra's edition of Balzac's *The Colonel Chabert*. Sebald underlines the abandonment of the survivor that the photograph represents by the literal interleaving between Austerlitz and Chabert: the one who was buried alive.

Not only does the traveling across the former border to Communist Europe and meeting Věra represent the ambivalent combination of finding new resources about his past and thus experiencing more pain, but crossing the now open border also symbolizes entering the realm of *postmemory*: through Věra, Austerlitz becomes exposed to narratives and images from his (parents') life that he does not recollect himself. Except for Věra's memories, photos are the only tangible clues, yet under closer investigation, the photo's value as documentary evidence becomes tenuous. Even as Austerlitz repeatedly and

thoroughly investigates the photograph of the young boy, which Věra confirms depicts him, his effort results in no recollection of himself in his early childhood or of his childhood in Prague (263-4). Similarly tenuous is the outcome of his examination of the Nazi propaganda film about the *Teresienstadt* concentration camp. Although the film's decreased running speed offers a contrast to the propaganda's pretentious positivity, as if itself revealing the dreadful circumstances of the inmates, the face Austerlitz assumes to be that of his mother is only hers speculatively: "Gerade so wie ich nach meinen schwachen Erinnerungen und den wenigen übrigen Anhaltspunkten, die ich heute habe, die Schauspielerin Agáta mir vorstellte, gerade so…sieht sie aus" (She looks, I tell myself as I watch, just as I imagined the singer Agáta from my faint memories and the few other clues to her appearance that I now have) (354-5). Marianne Hirsch argues in her 2012 reassessment of postmemory, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, that the images in *Austerlitz*, particularly the ones supposedly portraying Austerlitz's mother, indicate "the viewer's needs and desires"—also termed the "performative index"—rather than the subject's, as she puts it in Barthes's words, "having-been-there" (48). Instead of indicating the specific person who was photographed, the picture depicts Austerlitz's desire, an element essential to creating his postmemory world.

Hirsch classifies *Austerlitz* as a text of *affiliative postmemory*, which describes, according to Hirsch, the postmemory of nondescendents who affiliate with the victims. Similarly to the *postmemory* of descendents, *affiliative postmememory* deploys "familial and, indeed, feminine tropes [to] rebuild and re-embody a connection that is disappearing" (48). In this way, the "preformed [maternal or familial] image," Hirsch argues, becomes a paramount structural device in the transmission of *postmemory*. The Ladies Waiting Room,

which eventually connects Austerlitz with his past in Prague, introduces a feminine theme that conflates the opening borders to Eastern Europe, Austerlitz's mother, and the stage of *postmemory*: Austerlitz's access to his past happens through projection and imagination and is driven by the motivation of an abandoned child to reconnect with his mother.

Preforming the maternal image can express an attempt to reconstitute a sense of maternal care against the feeling of abandonment, just as he describes "himself" as the young pageboy in the photo, "der gekommen war, sein Teil zurückzufordern und der nun im Morgengrauen auf dem leeren Feld darauf wartete, daß ich den Handschuh aufheben und das ihm bevorstehende Unglück abwenden würde" (who had come to demand his dues, who was waiting in the gray light of dawn on the empty field for me to accept the challenge and avert the misfortune lying ahead of him) (264). In this self-reflexive quotation, Austerlitz describes how the mediated world, specifically images, becomes a realm counteracting the sense of loss, rupture, and abandonment but that is, at the same time, inherently broken.

*

Sebald creates in Austerlitz a figure traumatized by his individual experience of childhood abandonment at the dawn of the Holocaust. At the same time, it is a story embedded in an expansive network of trauma: the traumatic history of modernity with the Holocaust at its center and thus the perpetual interweaving with the trauma of others. It is this elaborate network, which—as perturbing as it may be—allows us to read Austerlitz as a reflection of his German counterpart, the narrator. The world of images with which Austerlitz attempts to compensate for his state of abandonment, as well as the world of cryptic edifices containing moments of abandonment, functions as a reflection of the narrator's own state of childhood abandonment. Most striking is the corresponding relationship between the role the

Ladies Waiting Room plays in Austerlitz's life as a locale of buried memories and Fort Breendonk as an equivalent place for the narrator. After Austerlitz regains his memory about his arrival in London at the Ladies Waiting Room, he experiences a psychological crisis in which he feels incarcerated in "einer sternenförmigen Festung, in einer von aller Welt abgeschnittenen Oubliette, aus der ich versuchen musste, ins Freie zu finden, durch lange niedrige Gänge" (a star-shaped fortress, a dungeon entirely cut off from the outside world, and I had to try finding my way into the open, passing down long, low passages) (200). What Austerlitz describes here in this identity crisis is a fortress just like Breendonk, in which the narrator wanders through its corridors, experiencing a crisis of his own.

The visit to Fort Breendonk is one of the few personal accounts of the narrator. Yet here, within the context of the Nazi atrocities at this particular place, he reveals a moment of recovering repressed familial memories in ways similar to what Austerlitz experienced at Liverpool Station. Upon viewing the casino at the fort, an after-work meeting point for SS men, he has a vivid vision of the

> Familienväter und die guten Söhne aus Vilsbiburg und aus Fuhlsbüttel, aus dem Schwarzwald und aus dem Münsterland, wie sie hier nach getanem Dienst beim Kartenspiel beieinander saßen oder Briefe schrieben an ihre Lieben daheim, denn unter ihnen hatte ich ja gelebt bis zu meinem zwanzigsten Jahr. (33)
>
> (good fathers and dutiful sons from Vilsbiburg and Fuhlsbüttel, from the Black Forest and the Bavarian Alps, sitting here when they came off duty to play cards or to write letters to their loved ones at home. After all, I had lived among them until my twentieth year).

This is one of few times the narrator refers to his German background. He suggests the association of him being one of the "Lieben" at home, while his father was one like the SS men at the casino, involved in war-related atrocities and writing letters home after finishing a day's work.

While Austerlitz feels the need to escape through the corridors of an imagined dungeon, the narrator, walking through the corridors further into the fort, experiences increasing darkness that not only stands for the lack of physical light but also the repression of the atrocities which most likely overshadowed his childhood. The deeper he enters the fortress the more he seems to have severe mental difficulties (34-35). Looking down to the bottom of the dungeon, the tiled floor reminds him of the washhouse in his family home, which in turn brings about memories of the local slaughterhouse and its butcher, as well as the smell of soap and the German term for a coarse scrubbing brush (Wurzelbürste) which his father particularly liked to use (35). The narrator opens the door to the horrors of childhood ("Schrecken der Kindheit") without further explanation, yet he gives a hint of a connection between Nazi brutalities, his own family history, and, most importantly, the silencing of it (37). The evocation of soap and cleaning utensils related to the narrator's family in correspondence with the sight of the torture dungeon of the Breendonk fortress allows the connection of a possible involvement of the narrator's father or closer family in the process of "ethnic cleansing" by Nazi Germany.[20]

Other texts by, and interviews with, Sebald suggest his own conflicted relationship with his parents (in particular his father) and their involvement in the Third Reich, as well as conflicting feelings about his "Vaterland" (fatherland) to which his paternal relationship seems to serve as a *pars-pro-toto*. In many of his interviews and talks Sebald describes repulsion toward the spotlessness in German towns and villages (particularly his home town), and the lack of remembrance, which resonates with *Austerlitz*'s narrator's association with the scrubbing brush and smell of soap at the fortress. Here, the narrator reacts to this memory

[20] Moreover, the symbol of the *Wurzelbürste* can be interpreted as "whitewashing" history, one of the circumstances Sebald complains about in respect to (West-) Germany in general.

by feeling sick and losing his vision for a moment (which also occurs at other crisis moments in the novel). Not only here does Sebald associate the act of cleaning (something off) with (the failure of) seeing. Lynn S. Schwartz points out in *The Energence of Memory: Converstions with W.G. Sebald* Sebald's "enveloping suspicion" of something that has not been revealed (Schwartz 15), made visible to him, about the past. This suspicion resonates with Sebald's comment about his father in one interview, "he must have seen a thing or two…" which his father refuses to remember or to talk about (interview with Corol Angier "Who is W.G. Sebald" *The Emergence of Memory* 66). The blindness and spotlessness goes along with the notion of a cut-off to the German past which has been passed on to Sebald and the narrator of *Austerlitz*. The experiences at the two edifices, Liverpool Station and the Breendonk fortress, allow, due to their strange mirror-relationship, for drawing a parallel between the narrator and Austerlitz that is related to both their childhoods. Sebald reflects in his story of the Jewish child victim, Austerlitz, his own experience of childhood abandonment: it is the silence about the atrocities committed by his father's generation which he feels compelled to voice.

Further, Sebald's narrative style suggests a mirroring between Austerlitz and the narrator. This mirroring is accomplished not only through the syntax and lack of quotations which make it difficult at times to decipher whether it is the voice of the first-person narrator or a direct speech by Austerlitz, but also through the shared melancholic and dream-like style. Further parallels are to be found in the shared peripatetic habits, which for both are often driven by other motivations than consciously chosen destinations or plans.

Yet the notion of abandonment due to silencing is the most striking parallel between the narrator and Austerlitz. As Austerlitz loses his mother tongue due to his trauma and

grows up in a silenced environment with his foster parents, the narrator seems to have grown up in a sort of silence as well. The narrator's own sense of childhood abandonment due to the silencing of his parents' secrets receives further support in Sebald's 1997 lecture *The Natural History of Destruction* (although it is not a literary persona who is the subject in the text but the author himself, there is a strong subtext of parallels between Sebald's narrator and his biography and personal statements, which allows a reading of some of Sebald's personal information as part of this text). In *The Natural History of Destruction* it is not so much the silencing of the war atrocities which constitutes Sebald's work but the silencing of the destruction of German cities:

> Die in der Geschichte bis dahin einzigartige Vernichtungsaktion ... ist nie ... zu einer öffentlich lesbaren Chiffre geworden...Der wahre Zustand der materiellen und moralischen Vernichtung, in welchem das ganze Land sich befand, durfte aufgrund einer stillschweigend eingegangenen und für alle gleichermaßen gültigen Vereinbarung nicht beschrieben werden. Die finsteren Aspekte des von der weitaus überwiegenden Mehrheit der deutschen Bevölkerung miterlebten Schlußakts der Zerstörung blieben so ein schandbares, mit einer Art Tabu behaftetes Familiengeheimnis, das man vielleicht nicht einmal sich selber eingestehen konnte. (12, 18).
>
> ([I]t never became an experience capable of public decipherment … There was a tacit agreement, equally binding on everyone, that the true state of material and moral ruin in which the country found itself was not to be described. The darkest aspect of the final act of destruction, as experienced by the great majority of the German population, remained under a kind of taboo, like a shameful family secret, a secret that perhaps could not even be privately acknowledged).

Within the context of his lament about his perceived insufficient representation of the effects of allied aerial warfare in German postwar literature and other media, Sebald portrays his own childhood as a disconnected encapsulation surrounded by the muting of these events:

> Das für mich im Laufe der Jahre stets deutlicher werdende, skandalöse Defizit erinnerte mich daran, daß ich aufgewachsen war mit dem Gefühl, es würde mir etwas vorenthalten, zu Hause, in der Schule und auch von den deutschten Schriftstellern, deren Bücher ich in der Hoffnung las, mehr über die Ungeheuerlichkeiten im Hintergrund meines eigenen Lebens erfahren zu können. (82-83)

> (I had grown up with the feeling that something was being kept from me: at home, at school, and by the German writers whose books I read hoping to glean more information about the monstrous events in the background of my own life).

Sebald feels left out, abandoned in what he perceives as a taboo. He perceives his childhood as "entirely unreal idylls" while he later found out

> daß damals, als ich auf dem Altan des Seefelderhauses in dem sogenannten Stubenwagen lag und hinaufblinzelte in den weiß-blauen Himmel, überall in Europa Rauchschwaden in der Luft hingen, über den Rückzugsschlachten im Osten und im Westen, über den Ruinen der deutschen Städte und über den Lagern, in denen man die Ungezählten verbrannte. (83-84)
>
> (that at the same time, when I was lying in my bassinet on the balcony of the Seefeld house and looking up at the pale blue sky, there was a pall of smoke in the air all over Europe, over the rearguard actions in the east and west, over the ruins of the German cities, over the camps where untold numbers of people were burnt).

Although kept in silence, Sebald feels nonetheless haunted and overshadowed by these events (71, 79). He describes his childhood as born from the suffering of World War II, which to him includes the Holocaust and German wartime experience. It is the idyll that Sebald attempts to rewrite, as for him it is false—a kind of betrayal of him and of the victims who cannot speak. To him, the silence he sensed growing up bears the cloud of the destruction.

Moreover, in his first poetic work *Nach der Natur* (*After Nature*, 1988), Sebald establishes a quasi-causal relationship between his own self and the silencing of the war-related suffering:

> In der Nacht auf den 28. Flogen
> 582 Maschinen einen Angriff
> Auf Nürnberg. Die Mutter,
> die am anderen Morgen nachhause in Algäu
> zurückfahren wollte,
> ist mit der Bahn bloß
> bis nach Fürth gekommen.
> Von dort aus sah sie Nürnberg in Flammen stehen,

> weiß aber heute nicht mehr,
> wie die brennende Stadt aussah
> und was für Gefühle sie
> bei ihrem Anblick bewegten.
> Sie sei, so erzählte sie neulich,
> von Fürth aus am selben Tag noch
> nach Windsheim zu einer Bekannten
> gefahren,wo sie das Schlimmste
> abgewartet und bemerkt habe,
> daß sie schwanger geworden sei. (73-74)
>
> (In the night of the 28th ,
> 582 airplanes attacked
> Nürnberg. Mother,
> who planned to return home to [the area of] Algäu
> the next day,
> only made it to Fürth by train.
> She could see Nürnberg burning from there,
> but can't tell to this day how it looked like,
> and what feelings she had at the sight of it.
> She went from Fürth to Windsheim, she told me recently,
> to stay with a friend while waiting
> for the worst to pass. There, she realized
> that she had become pregnant [translation mine]).

Sebald's mother's speechlessness upon the horror she witnessed coincides with her getting pregnant with her son. While this coincidence further explains Sebald's sense of being left in a silenced world, this quote allows us to view Sebald and his narrators as a replacement for the silencing, for, instead of putting the witnessed scene into words, his mother notices her pregnancy. As a consequence, the child feels compelled to say the unspeakable.

The role of the child is further emphasized in *On the Natural History of Destruction* by several powerful depictions of the suffering of children. Sebald's use of Stig Dagerman's description of West German cities in rubble with their "hustendenden Kinder[n], denen das Wasser, das immer auf dem Fußboden steht, in die zerschlissenen Schuhe schwappt" (coughing children and their battered and sodden shoes) (*Luftkrieg* 48) is underlined by a picture by Victor Gollancz showing a couple of children's thin legs and their dilapidated

shoes (49). Yet most striking is the account of a woman in a large crowd of people fleeing the burning city of Hamburg:

> Dabei fällt ein Pappkoffer "auf den Perron, zerschellt und entleert seinen Inhalt. Spielzeug, ein Nagelnecessaire, angesängte Wäsche. Zum Schluß ein gebratener, zur Mumie geschrumpfter Kinderleichnam, den das halbirre Weib mit sich geschleppt hat als Überbleibsel einer vor wenigen Tagen noch intakten Vergangenheit." (39)
>
> ("[Her] suitcase falls on the platform, bursts open and spills its contents. Toys, a manicure case, singed underwear. And last of all, the roasted corpse of a child…which its half-deranged mother has been carrying about with her, the relic of a past that was still intact a few days ago").

On the one hand Sebald describes his reaction to this scene as baffled and the situation as beyond his ability to comprehend. On the other hand, he centralizes this scene in his lecture as a way to access the experiences of the aerial warfare of that time and exemplifies suffering here as ultimate: it involves a child perceived as an innocent victim and therefore exempt from the political victim–perpetrator binary. The image receives further emphasis in the book version of *On the Natural History of Destruction*. In what can be read as a commentary on the lecture and its resonance, Sebald revisits the scene as if to verify it and to give it further weight: a German acquaintance living in England, who, as a nurse, helped with the refugees fleeing the burning German cities, confirmed to Sebald that "mehrere der mit diesem Transport aus Hamburg angelangten Frauen…hatten tatsächlich in ihren Gepäckstücken ihre toten, im Qualm erstickten oder auf andere Weise während des Angriffs ums Leben gekommenen Kinder dabei" (103) (several women on this train from Hamburg…actually did have dead children in their luggage, children who had suffocated in the smoke or had died in some other way during the air raid). Not only does it seem important to Sebald to verify the scene of dead children in their mothers' suitcases, he also points out that his source, the German nurse, is married to a German Jew who escaped from Sebald's German hometown

Sonthofen during the Nazi regime (102). Sebald appears to seek a sort of legitimization of German suffering by confirming it through someone associated with the main victim group of the Holocaust, and, at the same time, pleads for a universal understanding of suffering beyond common collective categorization.

Sebald's use of the motif of the abandoned child is twofold: concerning his own childhood, Sebald repeatedly underlines the proximity of his birth and the suffering caused by World War II and the Holocaust. He feels abandoned in the postwar era, which he perceives as a time of silencing and the whitewashing of any suffering. At the same time, he feels compelled to replace the silencing as some sort of a mouthpiece for everyone who became mute upon the horror.

The child victims Sebald portrays in *Austerlitz* and in *On the Natural History of Destruction* are a means for overcoming the inaccessibility of the past created by the silencing he repeatedly describes. They are passages for an emotional connection to the past in the sense of Hirsch's concept of (*affiliative*) *postmemory*: they are tropes that rebuild and embody a connection that is disappearing. In Sebald's case, however, it is not only a connection that is disappearing, the space of silence he describes appears more like a vacuum, a crypt, in which the connection had ever been denied.

Therefore, due to its connective function, the child victim or abandoned child trope is a means in Sebald's writing to alleviate his or his narrator's own sense of abandonment by piercing through the emotionally numbing wall of silence. Instead of reproaching his parents' and their age cohort's silence, he engages in the difficult endeavor to make up for it by attempting to imagine and to retrace that which has been muted. The texts that transpire under such a premise, dealing with the Holocaust and German suffering as a replacement for

German silencing, necessarily challenge ethical questions, as they bear in their core the inappropriateness of commemorating German suffering along with the suffering of victims of the Holocaust.

Conclusion

All three texts represent predominantly male perspectives that are still anchored in the structure of the nuclear family. The role of the male abandoned child, whether Jewish or German, reflects generational differences as a major perspective-forming factor, and, most notably in *Der Himmel über Berlin* and *Der Verlorene*, the position of the second generation reflected in the abandoned child still reveals the desire to distinguish oneself from the generation actively involved in the war. In all of the texts the abandoned child represents a vessel of the traumatic past: the Holocaust and World War II. While the motif of the abandoned child in *Der Himmel über Berlin* and *Der Verlorene* revolves around the war experience of German parents, the motif in *Austerlitz* is embedded in the legacy of Jewish victimhood. Yet all three texts show a significant step toward a new era of German memory culture starting around and after the *Wende* that distinguishes them from previous texts depicting similar issues.

Although predating the fall of the Wall, *Der Himmel über Berlin* employs this potential event as a central theme. While the end of Eastern European communism cannot be said to have had an effect on the film, the anticipation of the fall of the Berlin wall that the film reflects entails bidding farewell to the past, gaining discursive national power while simultaneously starting the future untainted with responsibility and guilt. Wenders departs from actual genealogical parents, but includes figures that represent cultural symbolic

parental qualities whose diegetic role is influenced by contemporaneous national identity politics. Wenders captures and confirms as a sort of seismic shift the atmosphere of departure as it built up in the political discourse during the Kohl administration and which led to the fall of the Wall two years after the release. Wenders chooses a way to cope with the past that is less polarizing and less critical than his previous releases and those of his colleagues of New German Cinema. His film is infused with a desire to gain foothold in a new (national) discursive power that corresponds with a conciliatory notion by strangely conflating father figures and Jewish victimhood. In the wake of the conservative takeover, it seems Wenders suggests burying the hatchet in the conflict with the father figure, while at the same time ridding oneself of guilt and responsibility. The desire for innocence unites with the desire for the female associated with the unknown and a new beginning.

While the generational relationship to the past also plays an important role in Treichel's *Der Verlorene*, it reveals signs of moving away from the polarization typical for literature of the 1970s and early 80s. While Treichel focuses on one individual family, the family life, however, is infused with cultural stereotypes of the time of the economic miracle, and thus its generic character has national relevance. Of all three texts, Treichel mimics the social setting of the *Väterliteratur* most closely, but seems to utilize this postwar family setting to introduce nuances of differentiation from texts of the 70s and 80s. The usually polarized relationship between first and second generation is partially deflected by the lost brother, contributing to a less fixed narrative point of view and a more complex psychological situation. Moreover, Treichel deviates from the typical family situation in novels of *Väterliteratur* by attributing a fair degree of influential power in the social dynamic to the mother. As she burns the family's cash, she considerably influences the power relation

in the family and underlines with this very same gesture the narrative importance of the lost son and therefore a more complex family structure. Treichel's style also contributes to a departure from the binary and polarizing perspective of the *Väterliteratur*. While the narrator certainly shows signs of traumatization due to the emotional neglect and preoccupation of his parents, he also reveals an emotional distance as noticeable in the use of satirical humor in the description of his parents' postwar world. As one of the first in German postwar literature, Treichel acknowledges German wartime trauma, yet does not indulge in sympathy, rather, the tone of condemnation toward the war generation gives way to one of increased emotional distance.

Sebald shifts the postwar family setting across the heretofore highly sensitive cultural line between victimhood and perpetratorship. The abandoned child, whose traumatizing experience originated during World War II, serves as a vehicle of trauma that exceeds the immediate historical circumstances of the war and the Holocaust. Sebald creates through the abandoned child a network that interconnects the Holocaust and theories involving trauma as the structural basis of narrative. Along with the identificatory power of the image of the child victim, this network describes a continuity that interlaces the cultural areas of victim and perpetrator legacy. Sebald's depiction of the abandoned child in *Austerltiz* reaches an unmatched fictionalization of Jewish victimhood in German postwar literature, yet it is used to mirror his perceived burden and sense of abandonment as a second generation German. While *Austerlitz* might be read as a written memorial dedicated to Germany's victims, the text revisits as well the notion of the German perspective being predominantly the one of perpetrators.

All three texts still show a perspective on the past that is largely influenced by a

generational construct and committed to the second generation's point of view. Yet all of them show signs that are part of a change in the depiction of cultural memory in German literature towards the end of the 20th century. These changes result in a less polarized relationship to the war generation, an increased blurring between the heretofore clear grouping of cultural memory in victims and perpetrator, increasing tendencies toward fictionalization, an multiplication of perspectives, and a stronger influence of the female.

CHAPTER 3

THIRD-GENERATION PERSPECTIVE AND FEMALE VOICES: THE ABANDONED CHILD IN NOVELS OF THE 2000S

In the stories of abandoned children presented in Chapter 2, second-generation German males grapple with their sense of postwar abandonment, the conflict with their parents' generation, and their parents' responsibility and suffering. The male German protagonists seek to overcome the reaction of simply blaming the parents and pursue ways of gaining ownership of their situation in the world of postmemory. The second chapter addresses texts published during the second decade after Germany's unification which witnessed a large number of third-generation women writers dealing with Germany's past. The selected texts include Katharina Hacker's 2006 novel *Die Habenichtse* (*The Have-Nots*, 2008), Jenny Erpenbeck's 2007 novel *Heimsuchung* (*Visitations*, 2009), and Julia Franck's 2007 novel *Die Mittagsfrau* (*The Blind Side of the Heart*, 2009). All three novels have bid farewell to the two-generational family structure as the main context of the motif of the abandoned child and contextualize the motif in a much broader social network. The transformation of the social situation of the abandoned child in these third-generation texts is so conspicuous that it must be considred a response to the second generation's judgmental and often unbalanced focus on the war generation. Elena Agazzi observes in the work of second generation German writers "eine bipolare

Dynamik der Beziehung zwischen den Generationen ... , während man im 'Familienroman' gewöhnlich an der Begegnung (und auch Auseinandersetzung) zwischen drei Generationen von Individuen teilhat … " (a bipolar social dynamic between the different generations … while the "family novel" usually emphasizes the dialogue and exchange between three generations of individuals [translation mine]) (*Familienromane, Familiengeschichten und Generationenkonflikte* 191). The abandoned child motif in these novels is embedded in a greater social network including several generations. Agazzi goes on to say that the third generation seeks to break taboos and to fill in voids of heretofore harbored secrets: the "no-dits [sic] bezüglich der nicht eingestehbaren Geheimnisse der Nazizeit" (the no-dits rerevolving around denied secrets of the Nazi past) (191). The work of the writers often reflects massive effort in archival research in order to fill the gaps in the family narrative. The purpose seems to be aimed at releasing a communicative lockdown between the parents' and grandparents' generation with the hope of gaining more understanding of the past by including, which means mostly inventing, multiple perspectives. However, my analysis of the abandoned child motif shall reveal that although the writers discussed in this chapter show an increased motivation to address family secrets compared to their parents' and grandparents' generation, most of the text discussed here still show signs of being fraught with repressed burdens of the past.

While the Holocaust and World War II is still central in the texts of Chapter 3, childhood abandonment is no longer only a symptom of this event but includes other causes as well. In *Die Habenichtse*, the abandoned child motif affects a group of unrelated people and reveals how each of them is dealing with their respective past. The

abandoned child motif in *Heimsuchung* represents from an East German perspective the disruptions of the concept of *Heimat* caused by political changes and atrocities throughout the 20th century. *Die Mittagsfrau* as well illustrates the chain of disruptive events of the 20th century. At the same time, however, the abandoned child motif in Julia Franck's novel serves as a means of explaining the social fissures caused by the political events of the last century. In all three novels, the abandoned child motif is interwoven in a larger historical framework of disruptions.

The increase of women among third-generation writers in the first two decades of the 21st century has been noticed in scholarship and attempts at describing their significance have been made. Heike Bartel and Elizabeth Boa's introduction to *Pushing at Boundaries: Approaches to Contemporary German Women Writers from Karen Duve to Jenney Erpenbeck* (2006) describes these women's writing as,

> [pushing] at boundaries in a multitude of ways: the subversion of gender stereotypes; … the merging of "high" and "low" culture; the invasion of cultivated spheres such as house and garden by "wild" nature and the (con)fusion of town and countryside; … the political and geographical crossing of borders between East and West Germany after the *Wende* and Berlin as a capital city and a capital city and an urban jungle … [representing a] heterogeneous and often conflictual culture. (7)

All three novels under consideration fit into this description of unconventional and sometimes even experimental narrative practices. Thus the texts require one to read the motif of the abandoned child as situated within their heterogeneous narratives, within which the Holocaust and World War II is but one aspect among many others, ranging from postunification German politics to the effects of globalization.

Consequently, although the motif of the abandoned child plays a significant role in these texts, contrary to the texts of Chapter 2, none of them is dominated by the

perspective of one abandoned child and the situation is never solely attributed to circumstances revolving around World War II or the Holocaust. Instead, the situation of abandonment is interwoven in a larger historical network of causes and effects. The writers represented in this chapter interweave multiple situations of abandonment that are caused by various historical and socio-political circumstances, affecting multiple generations, all while still addressing World War II and the Holocaust. Thus, all three novels transcend the binary categories of addressing conflicts related to the past as in *you* and *I*, or *parents* and *children*, but rather place the past within a larger temporal and social map in order to gain a greater understanding of one's legacy and sense of identity. As in the first chapter, the abandoned child in the novels under consideration here serves as a symptom of discontinuities caused by history, but, due to the emphasis placed on negotiating multiple generational memory discourses and other historical sources, the situation of abandonment no longer renders clear victim-perpetrator boundaries. The line is instead blurred or fluid. Thus parents, especially mothers, are often depicted as (partial) victims as well. The abandoned child and issues involved with the motif, such as trauma, generational conflicts, and the categorization of victimhood and perpetratorship are portrayed with a sense of equanimity.

The sense of disengagement in the texts discussed in this chapter also reflects the increased temporal distance from the Holocaust and World War II and a lack of first-hand witnessing of the war or immediate postwar years. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Vees-Gulani state in their introduction to *Generational Shift in Contemporary German Culture*: "freer and more nuanced in their approach to the German past, the third generation, or *Enkelgeneration*, … has been deemed to view this legacy [of World War II

and the Holocaust] with a new sobriety" (6). The motif of the abandoned child transcends the historical situation surrounding the German war baby (*Kriegskind*) and negotiates, by assessing multiple sources, the memories of their parents' as well as their grandparents' generation against the backdrop of official memory frameworks. However, in some cases the more nuanced, sober, and supposedly freer perspective of the third generation disturbingly disguises a form of their parents' or grandparents' guilt, which has been passed on to the third generation nonetheless.

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The emergence of young women writers in the beginning of the 21st century has been widely discussed in German feuilleton. Volker Hage, editor of the weekly *Der Spiegel*, labeled the young women writers emerging with their debuts in the late 1990s and early 2000s and whose narrative style highlights a sense of sobriety, "literarische Fräuleinwunder" (literary miracle girls, as quoted by Alexandra Merly Hill in *Playing House*, 3). Alexandra Merly Hill problematizes Hage's term in *Playing House: Motherhood, Intimacy, and Domestic Space in Julia Franck's Fiction* as a "marketing label" of a group of young writers who supposedly write "'über Erotik und Liebe, die Grundmelodie dieser Bücher,...nüchtern und ohne Illusion' [about eroticism and love, the basic melody of these books,…soberly and without illusions]" (translation Hill 3). Hill continues in pointing out the problem that Hage's assessment "implies a lack of engagement or social commentary by the authors" and that, due to the supposed lack of politics in these women's literature, "their literature was trivial...as were the authors themselves" (4). While the female voices analyzed in this chapter certainly discuss the themes they present with sobriety, these are by no means trivial themes. Rather, the motif

of the abandoned child receives through the female perspective of these texts more nuance and depth. As the female perspective is underlined in all three texts, the abandoned child motif is often tied to the female voice, either as a female abandoned child or in a (quasi) mother-child relationship, or both. All present texts are informed by the generational conflict typical for *Väterliteratur*, yet due to the combination of a strong female *and* multi-generational perspective the present texts serve as a deflection of the male and generation-centered conflicts of *Väterliteratur*. The large historical spectrum that the texts cover allows for an expanded female perspective of the history of the twentieth reaching into the twenty-first century indicating a counterpart to the heretofore male-dominated representation of history.

While the texts of this chapter are concerned with the female voice and women's rights, the female characters do not necessarily comply with feminist expectations. In particular, the motif of the abandoned child reflects that women should not be solely defined by their gender. A number of female characters dealing with (abandoned) children refuse to fulfill expectations of being caring and nurturing toward a child. Some of these women are unable to fulfill the expectation of the nurturing role as a mother due to their own distress while others are portrayed as failing to provide general humanitarian help and thus as incompetent. There is no univocally feminist message behind the description of women and the situations they are in. However, published during a time when former German news anchor Eva Herman spurred, with her publication *Das Eva-Prinzip* (2006), a new motherhood debate in Germany by claiming women should regress to their supposedly instinctive roles as housewives and stay-at-home mothers, the novels reflect that the depiction of motherhood or other qualities attributed to the female are

dependent on concomitant political and societal circumstances, and are therefore not innate, but are partially subverted or questioned.

All the authors establish complex situations in which female characters are equally flawed as men, bear responsibility for the situation, and in which the victim-perpetrator border is diffused, yet the victimization of women plays a significant role in all three texts, signaling that issues revolving around women's rights still matter. *Heimsuchung* und *Die Mittagsfrau* both cover a large historical window and illustrate certain time periods in the 20th century as more misogynistic, especially the period of National Socialism, while other times such as the Weimar Republic are portrayed as rendering more privileges for women, indicating that the improvement of women's rights is not necessarily a linear development.

Not only do the women writers discussed in this chapter provide a female response to the male-centric struggle with the past in the *Väterliteratur*, Hacker and Erpenbeck deliver a picture of the *Wende* that disagrees with the effect of accessing the past and the situation of new opportunities depicted in *Austerlitz* or the general hope for union in *Der Himmel über Berlin*. Both *Die Habenichtse* and *Heimsuchung* clearly reveal a situation of disillusionment in the after-effects of the *Wende*. *Die Habenichtse* reflects a generation's post-Perestroika optimism for global political improvement deflated and replaced by a sense of continuing global disasters such as 9/11 and a subsequent lack of prospects. *Heimsuchung* provides an East German perspective of the effects of the opening borders which, figuratively speaking, pulls the rug out from under an East German family who loses their property to the pre-GDR owners. Both novels indicate the larger time lapse between the text's emergence and the event that increases the dialectic

to the perception of the event and relativizes its positive impact. Still recent but clearly part of the past, the *Wende* is one of many life changing events portrayed in the expansive growing range of perspectives on the last century.

Katharina Hacker's *Die Habenichtse*

Katharina Hacker was born in 1967 in Frankfurt a. Main. After starting her degree at the University of Freiburg, Germany, she studied in Jerusalem for a substantial period of time. Her time in Israel influenced several of her writings which thematize the interrelation of present affairs and the past regarding both countries and their people. In 1997 she made her debut with the narrative *Tel Aviv: Eine Stadterzählung*; *Der Bademeister* (*The Lifeguard,* 2002) was her first novel, followed by *Eine Art Liebe* in 2003. *Der Bademeister* revolves around a public swimming pool which, in Hacker's typical fragmented style, delivers a narrative that connects past and present and eventually reveals a dark picture of the past. *Eine Art Liebe* is about a friendship between a German student studying in Israel and a Holocaust survivor. As the Holocaust survivor tells the student his story, Hacker's narrative oscillates between past and present. In 2006, Hacker won the German Book Prize with *Die Habenichtse*, after which she continued writing prose and poetry. Her latest novel, *Skip* (2015), again plays in Israel portraying an Israeli male protagonist whose story deals with issues of connecting the past and the present. However, in this new text Hacker integrates mystic and esoteric elements.

Katharina Hacker's 2006 novel *Die Habenichtse* (*The Have-Nots*, 2008), brings together post-World War II cultural memory and post-Cold War developments with the

immediate impact of 9/11. These themes include the Holocaust, the current global situation of the imminent Iraq war and its aftermath, as well as poverty and crime among Europe's less privileged citizens. The plot revolves around a young affluent German couple, Isabelle and Jakob from Berlin, pursuing successful careers. A turning point in the narrative is the young German couple's move from Berlin to London, where Jakob, an attorney specializing in property rights, accepts a position at a British law firm. This position had been meant to be filled by a friend killed in the World Trade Center attack. Isabelle works at a graphic design firm in Berlin and continues her work from her home in London. Isabelle's and Jakob's story is interwoven with several other storylines. These include Sara, a neglected and abused child who lives next door to their new London home, Jim, a small-scale drug dealer who is also Jakob's and Isabelle's neighbor, as well as Andras, a Jewish Hungarian living in Berlin who has been in love with Isabelle and struggles with his broken heart. As Isabelle and Jakob adjust to their new life in London they grow apart. Isabelle engages in a violent sexual relationship with the drug dealer Jim, and Jakob develops an attraction to his new boss Bentham, a Jewish child victim of the Nazi regime. This development culminates in a precarious situation involving Sara which drastically illuminates the Berlin couple's accumulative moral entanglement in her abusive environment.

Several scholars writing about *Die Habenichtse* focus on the entanglement of Holocaust survivors and their children and the offspring of perpetrators. In *Fictionalizations: Holocaust Memory and the Generational Contrast in the Works of Contemporary Women Writers* (2010) Katharina Gerstenberger describes "the Holocaust and its memory" as providing a sense of stability in the postmodern world (108). The

German protagonists, struggling in this world, according to Gerstenberger, no longer address their familial bonds but turn to Jews to explore their historical roots as the latter are described as mentally more adapted to the contemporary culture of violence. However, in her book *The Inability to Love: Jews, Gender, and America* (2015), Agnes Mueller sees the German-Jewish relationship as one that emasculates Jewish men and thus reads *Die Habenichtse* as undermined by a contemporary anti-Semitic subtext. In *'New concept – new life': Bodies and Buildings in Katharina Hacker's novel Die Habenichtse,* Monika Shafi interprets Hacker's novel as a text illustrating the futile longing for change and meaning in life, which is reflected in the high mobility of its protagonists and the focus on domestic space: "Though the figures of the novel are almost constantly on the move, relocating, travelling, or seeking work – all features that show them to be inhabitants of a globalized economy – it is their inability to create domestic space that affects them most profoundly" (435). Shafi concludes that in a globalized world less guarded by moral frameworks the protagonists lack the ability to make moral choices and to find meaning in life.

Analyzing *Die Habenichtse* through the lens of the abandoned child motif focuses on the novel's oscillation between past and present and renders two groups of people in the novel: the ones who experienced childhood abandonment and whose family history is embedded in historical suffering contrasted by the two German protagonists who experienced a childhood of wealth and without hardship but with familial dysfunction due to the harboring of family secrets. The former group appears to have been able to negotiate and introject their own trauma within the context of their families and their historical roots, and thus lead an integrated and mentally balanced life. The protagonists,

however, are described as lacking the ability to connect to their social environment and to each other in an empathetic and integrative way, and therefore stumble, figuratively speaking, through life with the social competence of abandoned children while maintaining their parents' habit of hiding secrets. Whereas I described the abandoned child in *Austerlitz* as a vehicle of trauma, the protagonists in *Die Habenichtse* may be described as a vehicle of their grandparents' shame.

The abandoned child motif pervades almost the entire figurative inventory of the novel, although the type and degree of abandonment and victimization vary among characters. Aside from the characters who experience abandonment and victimization during childhood, the motif appears abstract, detached from the familial triangle of father, mother, and child. The novel provides a strong female perspective yet it does not convey any overt feminist message. Although the text portrays victimization of females, unfair treatment of male figures is equally portrayed.

Hacker's morally unengaging and distanced third-person narrative style describes a dark, fragmented, and often menacing world. The narrative voice remains detached and sober as it portrays the victimization of a child or a female and underlines the lack of emotional engagement among the characters. At times it represents the protagonists' perspective and underlines their perception of being threatened by this world, as well as their inability to successfully connect with it and to enrich their lives through it. The plot follows several simultaneous story lines that provide a large enough canvas to illustrate the protagonists' social network but at the same time they underline their inherently fractured lives and disconnected relationship(s). Hacker's style reflects the disjointed globalized world of the protagonists as it provides the narrative in fragments and remains

neutral and detached in grave situations.

*

The novel's first chapter introduces Sara, the abused and abandoned child, shortly after moving into her family's new home in an upper-middle class neighborhood that, according to her brother Dave, promises a new beginning and improvement of the family's social status and internal family problems (8). Yet, although the reader does not know Sara's life before this move, the opposite seems to happen. The following chapters about Sara, which interlace with Isabelle's and Jacob's life, reveal that Sara is left alone at home, her physical and mental needs are neglected, she experiences physical violence, and witnesses violence between her parents daily. The only one who is portrayed as caring toward Sara is her brother Dave, who is himself suffering from neglect and abuse by his parents.

Sara's most regular social contact is her cat, Polly, which becomes closely associated with her in the development of the plot. Her brother's term of endearment for her is "little cat," and, like the cat, Sara is left alone all day, sharing with the cat her favorite spot behind the sofa (Hacker 53). Thus Sara's existence seems to have more in common with that of the superstitious appearance of a cat as she, throughout the lonely daytime, strays in and out of the house, and crosses paths with her neighbors like an ominous sign of bad news or doom:

> [v]or seinem Fenster sah [Jim] ein kleines Mädchen … das Gesicht wirkte blass und spitz. Anscheinend hielt sie nach jemanden Ausschau …, aber niemand kam, und schließlich verschwand sie. Jim ärgerte sich darüber, als hätte sie etwas mitgenommen, was ihm gehörte. (102)
>
> (Outside his window he could see a little girl…her face looked pale and pinched. She seemed to be looking out for somebody … but nobody came and eventually she disappeared from view. Jim felt angry, as though she had gone off with

> something that belonged to him [translation by Helen Atkins, including all following translations of *Die Habenichtse*]).

Sara appears similarly peripheral and unexpected to Jakob during his move to Lady Margaret Road:

> zum Glück war die Straße jetzt leer, nur ein kleines Mädchen tauchte jetzt auf, wollte schon los und vor den Laster rennen, Jakob packte es am Arm, ein blasses Ding mit einer roten Mütze und großen, grauen Augen, das ängstlich zurückwich. (105)
>
> (fortunately the road was empty now, but then a little girl suddenly appeared and was on the point of running out in front of the vehicle, when Jakob grabbed her by the arm; she was a pale little thing in a red woolly hat, with big gray eyes, who shrank back nervously).

She reappears a day before Isabelle arrives in London:

> Jakob [sah] das kleine Mädchen mit der roten Mütze...in der Kentish Town Road...Als er in die Lady Margaret Road einbog, wäre er fast mit jemanden zusammengestoßen, dessen heller Anorak so plötzlich auftauchte wie ein Blitzlicht, Jakob schloss die Augen, der Mann zischte etwas so hasserfüllt, dass Jakob erschrak. (107)
>
> (Jakob saw the little girl with the red woolly hat…in Kentish Town Road…As he turned into Lady Margaret Road, he almost collided with somebody whose light-colored anorak came out of nowhere, with the suddenness of a flashbulb going off, making Jakob blink, and the man hissed something with such venom that he was momentarily alarmed).

Finally, on the day of Isabelle's arrival, as she enters their London home, a sense of order returns to Jakob's life: the thoughts about the little girl, whose little pale face has grown uncanny to him, have disappeared: "der Weg zwischen seinem Zuhause und der Kanzlei war ein anderer geworden, kein Bucklicht Männlein, und sein Leben war das eines Ehemannes" (his route between home and the office was different now, no hobgoblin popping up, and his life was that of a married man) (116). Sara's emergence in the lives of her neighbors is linked to a sense of uneasiness, and in Jakob's case, the sightings of her are associated with imminent close-call situations. Like the "Blitzlicht" of the bright

coat, Sara might be described as a warning of some kind, an attempt to draw attention not only to her own abusive environment but also to a more expansive issue underlying these young adults' lives. Yet Jakob wards off the uneasy feeling by focusing on an imaginary heterosexual upper-middle class life which is, as both of Isabelle's and Jakob's desires bespeak, greatly flawed.

As Isabelle spends a large part of her day at the couple's London apartment adjacent to that of Sara's family, Isabelle at first only *hears* the evidence of abuse in Sara's family. On a daily basis, Isabelle hears disturbing noises of great physical force, of begging and pleading voices, but decides to remain inactive, and, just like Jakob with the sightings of Sara, decides to ignore them (151-52). Here again, Sara's emergence, albeit auditory, alludes to a more extensive and subliminal issue; the pleading and begging voice might also be interpreted as Isabelle's own internal voice. Yet as these noises fade, they are overwritten by another event, representing the fleeting mental engagement of their listener with them.

However, just like Sara, Isabelle spends most of her day inside her apartment. Her current work is nearly all related to the world of children: assignments for a children's book publisher, for a children's music school, etc. While creating art for children, Isabelle repeatedly hears the alarming noises from next door "[s]ie tuschte dem Mädchen einen roten Rock, als nebenan der Lärm wieder anfing, etwas gegen die Wand schlug, eine erregte Stimme laut wurde ... und vielleicht war es ein dünnes Weinen, was sie dann hörte" (she was inking in a red skirt for the little girl with the long hair when the noise started up again next door, something slammed into the wall, she heard a loud, agitated voice … and perhaps it was a faint, thin crying that she heard now) (164). She sends an e-

mail to her friend and colleague Andras with her drawing of a little girl that

> rannte in einem roten Mantel, rannte hastig, wie in Panik davon, und [Andras] las, *Das Nachbarskind ist das Vorbild, obwohl ich es auf der Straße noch nie gesehen habe, es darf wahrscheinlich nicht aus dem Haus und ist sehr blaß*. (197)
>
> (was running away at speed, as if in panic, and [Andras] read, *The child next door is the model for this, although I've never seen her in the street. She's probably not allowed out of the house, and is very pale*).

Taking Sara as model for her art on one hand while on the other hand not showing any further interest in Sara's situation shows an alarming disconnect between Isabelle's view and her environment. Underlined by the color red, Hacker weaves a red thread between Isabelle and the abandoned child and although, or perhaps because, she does not intervene, Isabelle and the abandoned child develop a significant, albeit ambivalent, connection.

This relationship culminates in a distressing encounter in Sara's backyard. It not only reveals more of Sara's troubling background, but Isabelle's as well. It is a warm early summer day, and Sara wants to go outside into the backyard. The situation is introduced by Sara's stream of consciousness which describes her fear of being unworthy caused by the reiterated deprecation directed at her by her parents (222). What follows outside in the backyard can be described as Sara's reaction to being the weakest link in the chain of aggression: during imaginary play or some sort of day dream, Sara severely beats her cat Polly which she imagines to be a dangerous beast (224). The child then physically and mentally collapses, breaks out in tears and vomits (225). Isabelle, after witnessing this disturbing scenario, makes an ambiguous attempt to intervene. She climbs the wall into the neighboring back yard and finds Sara lying doubled up on the ground. Isabelle's approach to the child shows little compassion but is rather harsh: "Sie

betrachtete den Streifen Kinderfleisch ohne Freundlichkeit“ (Isabelle’s eyes rested without sympathy on the bare strip of childish flesh), and barks at her to get up (227). Yet she tells Sara that she wants to help her and wraps her jacket around her to keep her warm (228). But her caring for Sara ends here; she looks helplessly at the crying child who reaches her arms up to Isabelle in expectation of being helped out of her backyard and her miserable situation. Instead, Isabelle takes the cat with her and leaves Sara behind staring at Isabelle “[m]it sprachlosem Entsetzen … alles Kindliche war aus [ihrem] Gesicht verschwunden, es gab nur noch Ausweglosigkeit und Leid darin” ([i]n speechless horror she was staring at Isabelle, and now there was no trace of anything childlike in her face, only hopelessness and suffering), and, Isabelle, looking down at Sara from the ledge of the wall, laughs (230). Isabelle’s lack of compassion is shocking; it illustrates in a drastic way the noncommittal relationship that is representative of the majority of relationships portrayed in the novel. Yet with Isabelle’s ambivalent attempt to intervene, Hacker also challenges the common expectation that a female adult has the naturally caring traits associated with motherhood. Isabelle does not show any caring tendencies toward Sarah; to the contrary, she is appalled by the child. Hacker therefore provides an opportunity to question general assumptions about the desire to nurture as an innate female characteristic.

Although Isabelle comes across as mostly uncaring, the situation is ambiguous since Isabelle seems very aware of the dire situation next door. In a stream of consciousness passage Isabelle seems to reflect on the backyard incident, and, while she on one hand thinks it was ridiculous to get involved (230), on the other hand she questions: “[h]atte sie dem Mädchen geholfen, wie es ihre Absicht war? Später würde sie

durch die dünnen Wände den Geräuschen aus der benachbarten Wohnung lauschen und wissen, was dort geschah, beinah so, als wäre sie beteiligt" ([h]ad she helped the girl, as had been her intention? Later she would listen, through the thin walls, to the noises from next door, and know what was going on there, almost as well as if she herself were taking part in it) (231). Isabelle shows signs of being, at least partially, aware of the guilt she took upon her when she left behind Sara, who, as Isabelle finds out later, is left outside for the entire following night. In another reflective moment, while looking at the neighbors' trashed backyard, Isabelle contextualizes her neighbors' and her own situation within the global web of suffering: "Es könnte überall sein…in Bosnien, in Belgrad, es war immer die Gegenseite ihres eigenen Lebens. Als wäre das Maß an Leid festgesetzt, nur die Verteilung offen" (This could be anywhere...Bosnia, Baghdad, it was always the obverse of her own life. As if the measure of suffering were fixed, only its distribution variable) (229-30). As keywords of genocidal events such as *Bosnia* evoke the Holocaust, Hacker implicitly establishes an association between the abandoned neighbor's child and the Holocaust and makes Isabelle's bystander position resemble that of her grandparents' generation. She shows awareness of violence and suffering that happen far away, but that also exists right next to her. Misery and suffering is not only what she sees on television and the internet; like the effects of the Iraq war brought to her from far-away places, it is part of her immediate life. However, regardless of how close to her it happens, she perceives it as the opposite of her own life and feels sheltered from it. Her observation mirrors the arrogant assumption of someone who has been economically privileged her entire life, namely that suffering of the kind she sees in Sara will never happen to her and thus reflecting a lack of experience and her immaturity. Sara's situation has the same

effect on her as the televised images of conflicts and suffering in the Balkans or the Middle East: it is unreachable and has nothing to do with her. Isabelle is unable to contextualize herself in her own social environment and to view critically the ethical implications of her actions.

Conversely, even though Isabelle describes the suffering of the less privileged as the opposite side to her life, it is a side of her life after all. While she climbs the wall to get to the other side—in this case to Sara in her neighbor's backyard—she recalls Andras' comment on her drawing of the girl with the red coat: "Das Mädchen mit dem roten Mantel erinnert mich an diesen Film *Wenn die Gondeln Trauer tragen* [*Don't Look Now* by Nicholas Roeg, 1973]. Es hat etwas gemeines an sich, als wäre die Kindheit nur ein Versteck, aus dem man den anderen auflauert" (The girl in the read coat reminds me of that film *Don't Look Now*. There is something mean about her, as though childhood were nothing but a hiding place that you lurk in wait for people) (227). Not only does Andras emphasize the uncanny and threatening aspect of the child figure in Hacker's novel, his comment and Isabelle's recollection of it draw a significant but ambivalent identificatory connection between Isabelle and Sara. All of the children that Isabelle draws wear either a red coat or a red skirt. In correspondence to the red coat and skirt, Sara is described as wearing a red hat when uncannily emerging in her neighbor's field of vision (105, 107). Moreover, Isabelle herself is not only repeatedly identified with red clothing items such as red boots and red underwear, but also with characteristics of a child: "Kinder mochten [Isabelle], als wäre sie selbst ein Kind, nur verkleidet, eine gealterte Vierzehnjährige, hatte Alexa [Isabelle's friend in Berlin] behauptet und Kinderwäsche aus Frottee gekauft" (Children like her, as if she herself were only a child

in disguise. An older version of a fourteen-year-old, Alexa had said, and she had bought some children's underwear made from terry toweling and photographed Isabelle in it) (14). While the red color connects Isabelle with Sara as a child-like figure, the color also diffuses the binary categories of adult and child. Isabelle's friend Alexa from Berlin takes erotic photos of Isabelle wearing children's underwear. The photos, as well as the red color of Isabelle's children's terry underwear, are repeatedly mentioned throughout the novel:

> Isabelle's Kinderkörper, abgeschnitten oberhalb des Mundes, die kleinen Brüste, der leicht hervorstehende Bauch und die kräftigen Mädchenbeine. Alexa hatte sie so oft fotographiert, daß sie, obwohl sie es obszön fand, die rote Frottee-Unterhose schließlich herunterzog, bis unter ihre Scham ... [a]bgeschnitten oberhalb des Mundes, die rote Frotteewäsche, der Bauch wölbte sich ein bißchen vor, sie hatte die Schenkel leicht gespreizt, und es erregte sie zu sehen, wie obszön die Fotos waren. (56, 108)
>
> (Isabelle's childlike body, cut off above the mouth, the small breasts, the slightly rounded stomach, the strong legs of a young girl. Alexa had photographed her so often that, although she thought it was obscene, she finally pulled down the red toweling panties to below her pubic area … Cut off above the mouth, the red toweling underwear, the stomach protruding a little, and she had her thighs slightly apart: it aroused her to see how obscene the photos were).

The aspect of the child figure that Hacker creates with the element of red clothing is complex. It connects an abused child from a socially less privileged family and an affluent young female adult. In Sara's case, her red hat stands for her disturbing appearance in the life of her neighbors, and thus for the deficits of society that threaten their fragile upper-middle class happiness. Isabelle's red clothing, however, emphasizes a child-like aspect in her that contributes to her attractiveness, but also evokes the sense of an undiscerning way of decision making and lack of maturity which is reflected in the highly awkward and unsuccessful attempt to help Sara.

The issue of Isabelle's child-like features gets further worked through in her

relationship with Andras. On one hand Andras feels a strong erotic attraction to Isabelle's child-like features such as "das Schulranzenlachen," but simultaneously senses in her something menacing. He has recurring dreams about Isabelle in which she is "nackt und älter, als sie in Wirklichkeit war, eine alternde Frau in einem kindlichen Körper und mit leerem, hilflosem Gesicht, das er liebte, doch was er sah, blieb fremd und bedrückend" (naked and older than she was in reality, an aging woman in a childlike body, wearing a helpless vacant expression) (198). And while he prepares to move in with his girlfriend Magda „fiel ihm ein, was er geträumt hatte, einen ähnlichen Traum, wie vor ein paar Monaten. [Isabelle] stand in einem kahlen Zimmer nackt im Neonlicht, älter und kleiner, als er sie erinnerte, eine alternde Frau in einem Kinderkörper" (he suddenly recalled what he had been dreaming, a dream similar to the one he had had a few months ago. [Isabelle] was standing in a bare room, naked under the neon lighting, older and smaller than he remembered her, an aging woman with a child's body) (288). Not only does the combination of an old woman in a child's body appear to be disturbing in his dream, it is also the allusion to the ending of the aforementioned film *Don't Look Now*, in which the protagonist Jonathan is deceived by a small person in a red coat who he thought to be his young deceased daughter. The film ends with the shocking discovery that the small person in the red coat is not a child but a mean-looking old lady and Jonathan's killer. Although Isabelle is not a serial killer like the red-coated dwarf in *Don't Look Now*, the disturbing conflation of the old and the young might represent a lack of middle age which results in a latent and life-long immaturity, a child-like naiveté due to a lack of development, or simply a state of being rather disengaged and helpless in life. The effects of this helplessness, as Hacker illustrates, are potentially as detrimental

as a serial killer on the loose, as Sara might as well have died after being left behind in the backyard by Isabelle. The red-clothed child represents two related things: the actual child, the most innocent victim of disaster, as well as the child-like immaturity or helplessness of an affluent young German who is incapable of taking on responsibility for her social environment.

While mainly representing the privileged middle class of young German adults, Isabelle also shares with Sara to a limited degree abandonment and victimhood. Her situation of abandonment, however, results from a wealthy but vapid domestic situation. Isabelle describes her parental home as a shoe box, which is too small and boring for dramas and tragedies (40). One childhood incident that Isabelle shares with Andras suggests the oppressiveness of the wealth in her household. While moving the mother's grand piano, the movers almost drop it on the five-year-old Isabelle who had been sitting on the floor unnoticed. Thus the grand piano, as symbol of a well-to-do household, might be interpreted in the German term as literally "erdrückend" (oppressive, crushing) to Isabelle (44). Yet more depressing to Isabelle is her mother's illness that lingers for years, during which she remembers her mother in a state between life and death (45). In celebration of the mysterious disappearance of her mother's illness, her father gets into the habit of throwing elaborate cocktail parties that herald yet another dreadful phase in Isabelle's childhood: "ein unablässiges gesellschaftliches Treiben, das sie hinter Stapeln von Tellern und unter riesigen Tabletts mit Cocktails verbannte, in der Gestalt des hässlichen Entleins" (a ceaseless round of social gatherings at which her allotted place was behind piles of plates and under huge trays of cocktails, taking the role of the ugly duckling) (45). The mother's inexplicable disease as well as her mysterious recovery

point to family secrets that remain hidden from Isabelle. Also the father's urge to throw parties, which Isabelle perceives as overblown and consequently feels displaced while they take place, smack of an attempt to compulsively cover up an underlying problem. Similar to being banned behind the stacks of plates and cocktail glasses during the family parties, Isabelle is blocked off from some unspeakable shame in her family causing her to grow up in a vacuous situation where something as heavy as the grand piano is hovering over her threatening to crush her. Contrasted with Sara's life, Isabelle's lack of a loving environment is closely related to the wealth and the copious lifestyle of her parents. Nonetheless, in comparison to Sara's life, Isabelle's anecdotes of her unhappy childhood appear as petty problems and make, in Andras' view, not even a good story; they are narrative fragments that lack depth, like the rest of her life (45). Andras' point is valid: they do not make a good story because they are merely fragments—a scratching on the surface of unspeakable secrets which have not been told.

In her adult life Isabelle experiences physical abuse like Sara, but the violence in Isabelle's case is sexualized. Not only does she engage in a lasting abusive affair with the drug dealer Jim, but also, as the only female in a sexual encounter with her husband and his colleague Alistair, she is physically coerced and humiliated by the two men (189). Yet while these three continue to spend their leisure time together, none of them addresses what happened between them and instead all of them seem to repress it (210). Just like the noises from next door, Sara's uncanny appearance, and her obvious neglect, this humiliating and disturbing incident is ignored and repressed by the victim and perpetrators. Along with the couple's active pursuit of extramarital sexual desires, the incident of sexual victimization reveals Isabelle's and Jakob's relationship as lacking

respect for each other and awareness of the other's needs. Jakob and Isabelle become increasingly entangled in harboring secrets thus continuing a social dynamic in their relationship which they inherited from their parents.

Through the juxtaposition of the abandoned and abused neighbor's child and the life of a well-to-do young German woman, Hacker delivers a picture of the German third generation that shows resemblance to symptoms of the postwar area of the economic upsurge, the so-called *Wirtschaftswunderjahre*: instead of recognizing her own issues, comprehending her family's secrets as well as communicating her own, Isabelle lives a consumerist lifestyle, which generally distracts her from reminders, such as other people's suffering, of her own unstable world. Sara's physical proximity unsettles the lives of the privileged and challenges their control of their own problems by means of their prosperous, career- and consumption-driven safe haven. Isabelle discloses similar symptoms as her parents: repressing the shame or distress with consumption and wealth. The pattern of repression in Isabelle's family suggests that her grandparents used to do the same during the *Wirtschaftswunder*, and, due to its persistent transgenerational continuity, evokes the sense that the reason for shame is severe and situated within the context of World War II.

*

Similar to Isabelle, Jakob has experienced several disruptions in his relationship to his parents during his childhood and young adult life. Like Isabelle's childhood experiences, they are mentioned only briefly and in an insignificant manner. Jakob lost his mother when he was eleven and his aunt takes her place in the family's household while she eradicates almost all traces of Jakob's mother. Jakob does not talk for several

weeks after his mother dies, yet this symptom of traumatization is merely touched upon. Even later in his life, when his boss Bentham tells him about the death of his partner Graham, Jakob downplays the loss of his mother: "Außer meiner Mutter habe ich noch nie jemanden verloren" (Apart from my mother, I've never lost anybody) (256). The seemingly insignificant role of Jakob's and Isabelle's childhood and the resistance to consciously drawing meaning from their own losses or experiences go hand in hand with their apparent inability to connect with each other.

Jakob's relationship to his father also reveals interruptions. First of all, his aunt's dominant take-over of the family home suggests that, along with the loss of the mother, the father's presence was rather insignificant in Jakob's childhood (15). Being unable to have a good relationship with his father after the death of the mother, Jakob is relieved when he leaves his parental home to go to university (16). Subsequently, the unification is not only a pivotal moment for Jakob's professional orientation, as a paramount change in his political environment it means another disruption in the paternal structure of his life. After an initial sensational curiosity, Jakob is repelled by the political developments surrounding the unification: "Er fühlte sich, als zöge man ihm den Boden unter den Füßen weg, sein Land, die Bundesrepublik, verschwand, so daß er auswanderte, ohne es zu wollen" (He felt as if the ground was being cut from under his feet: his country, the Federal Republic, was disappearing, so that he was emigrating willy-nilly, without moving from the spot) (18). Clearly, Jakob perceives his prosperous comfort zone in West Germany threatened by the unification. At the same time, he grows more fascinated with the unresolved property rights issues that arise after the fall of the Wall. The unification is the moment that instills in Jakob the assumption that history can be

corrected. Yet expressing this interest in property restitution to his father ends all contact with him. His aunt explains his father's reaction as fear and discomfort about his own situation since Jakob's grandfather bought out a Jewish partner in his company during the period of aryanization (18).

Several moments of disruption happen here at the same time. First, the unification makes Jakob feel robbed of his country. Second, the political development draws attention to hundreds of unresolved property rights cases, including the one in which his father is involved. Third, Jakob loses contact with his father who feels threatened by Jakob's interest in restitution rights. As Katharina Gerstenberger points out, Jakob does not see any connection between his professional pursuit of property rights and his family history (107). However, Jakob's interest and professional involvement in the issue of property rights restitution might be interpreted as a subliminal motivation to solve all three of these disruptions: to reclaim his home the way his mother arranged it, to compensate for his loss of the Bundesrepublik, and at the same time address unresolved property share issues in his father's company. Thus, Jakob, by unconsciously trying to compensate them, carries on the family secrets just like his wife.

Just like Isabelle and Sara, Jakob and Bentham, Jakob's boss at the law firm in London, form a juxtaposition which further reveals the German third generation's shortcomings. As a surviving Jewish child victim of the Nazi Regime, Bentham represents in Hacker's novel the connection of the abandoned child to Germany's ugly past. Like Isabelle and Sara, the juxtaposition of Jakob and Bentham illuminates the German third-generation problematic represented in the young couple. The novel suggests that Bentham, just like Austerlitz, was rescued from the persecution by being

evacuated to London with the *kindertransports*: "denn Bentham sei alleine in London angekommen, mit einem Pappschild um den Hals, mit nichts, zur Adoption freigegeben" (someone who had arrived there all alone, with no pocessions, nothing but a cardboard sign around his neck, and had been put up for adoption) (182). Bentham says of himself that being left behind is his specialty, since he is not only a Jewish child victim of National Socialism, he also lost his partner in a motorcycle accident (146). Moreover, the legal affairs of those being left behind—restitution and property rights issues of Jewish clients—are also the specialty of Bentham's law office. Thus Bentham is closely connected to the issue of restitution and thus reconciliation. This topic's complexity is further increased as Jakob becomes employed by Bentham as a young German attorney for whom Bentham serves as a fatherly mentor. Jakob's clients are Jewish child victims—abandoned children searching for their lost homes—to whom he sells his service of advocating the restitution of something that can't be restituted.

Benefiting from someone's misfortune or demise is a significant part of both Jakob's and Isabelle's careers as they are furthered by the death of a colleague, who also happens to be a good friend and whose place they take over. In Isabelle's case it is Hanna who, when terminally ill, bequeaths Isabelle, formerly Hanna's assistant, her share in the graphic design company (35). Jakob receives the long desired career-furthering position at Bentham's office as replacement for his friend and colleague Robert, who dies in the attacks on the World Trade Center (26). Thus, although Jakob and Isabelle have nothing to do with these people's deaths, both of their professional desires are fulfilled as a result of the demise of someone else. Their innocent good fortune in the face of someone else's death further alludes to the issues behind their third-generation position: their situation

resembles the economical and professional advantage many Germans experienced during the Nazi Regime due to the demise of the Jews, taking over their positions and property. While the third generation cannot be held accountable for their grandparents' culpability, many of them benefit directly and indirectly from the disenfranchisement of Jews, even if it just means being a highly-paid German lawyer for restitution rights.

Jakob's job—to proceed legally against people who took possession of expropriated property—is ironically closely linked to his own path of progress in his career: it entails being fortunate as a result of someone's misfortune or demise. Yet he is convinced by his good intentions as a lawyer that he can rectify history through re-installments of rights and restitution: "Die Geschichte, Familien, Erbschaften, Kontinuitäten. Und wir Juristen sind rückwirkend immer Historiker einer als gerecht gedachten Geschichte, eine Rechtlichkeit, die objektiv ist" (The past, families, inheritances, continuities. And we lawyers are always working retrospectively as historians of a past that is notionally just, an objective legality) (146). Jakob's positivistic view on history is as questionable and naive as his role as German lawyer, being hired by mostly Jewish clients to restitute their rights, for Jakob—as German—avails himself, albeit ignorantly, of the misery of Jews once again. The inheritance and continuities he talks about cannot only be understood as referring to the right of Holocaust survivors and their descendants to claim what is rightfully theirs, but also to Jakob as continuing his grandfather's deed of enriching himself at the cost of the disenfranchisement of Jews.

Jakob expresses the unconscious burden of his grandfather's past in a growing fascination with Bentham that gradually turns into a sexual attraction and even into an obsession with his boss. Upon his return to Berlin after his first visit at Bentham's law

office, as Jakob describes Bentham to Andras, he blushes and declares "[e]r ist so anders als Schreiber [his former boss], ich habe jemanden wie ihn noch nie kennengelernt" ([h]e is quite unlike Schreiber, I've never met anyone like him before) (92). Jakob's first impression of Bentham is that of a charismatic and mysterious man. Jakob works overtime to spend as much time as possible in Bentham's presence (122). He looks forward to his walks with Bentham, during which he observes him intently like a small child (180). When Jakob thinks about or observes Bentham, the latter's past seems to be present in the back of Jakob's mind: "[Bentham] … stand auf und ging ans Fenster, das hinter dicken Vorhängen vollständig verborgen war, wie in der Zeit der Verdunkelung, dachte Jakob, aber damals war Bentham ein Kind gewesen" (Bentham...stood up and went over to the window, which was completely hidden behind heavy curtains, as in the days of the blackout, Jakob thought, though at that time Bentham had been no more than a child) (145). In Jakob's perception, Bentham's past is fascinating and obscure at the same time precisely because it is entangled with the darkening of his own family history. Thus their exchanges seem to animate Jakob's desire to investigate his country's history: "Ich habe mich noch nie so sehr mit Deutschland beschäftigt, sagte Jakob am Telefon zu Hans...ich frage mich, ob ich all diese Bücher in Berlin hätte lesen können" (I've never made such an intensive study of German, Jakob told Hans over the phone, I wonder whether I'd have been able to read all these books in Berlin) (179). Not only does Jakob's comment suggest that leaving Germany behind—his cultural comfort zone—leads him to develop a strong interest in recent German history, but so does the opportunity to meet a survivor, a child victim of Nazism. Leaving Germany, meeting Bentham, and developing the fascination for him result in an educational effect that makes Jakob question formerly

held assumptions like his view on his role as lawyer and his influence on history. This sudden interest in the Holocaust at the age of thirty also indicates Jakob's previous repression of that period.

Not only is Jakob fascinated by Bentham, his colleague Alistair shows signs of jealousy as he notices Jakob's attraction to his boss:

> Alistair ließ hin und wieder eine Bemerkung fallen, wenn er zu Jakob in den dritten Stock kam….Er erkundigte sich zwar nach Miller [Jakob's client] oder Jakobs Lektüre, aber es war deutlich, daß er kam, etwas zu überprüfen ...E r war, empfand Jakob, arglos und dabei auf sanfte Weise boshaft, als wolle er seine eigene Liebe zu Bentham ausschöpfen. (180)
>
> (Now and again Alistair would pass a comment when he came up to Jakob's room on the third floor…Although he would inqure about Miller or about Jakob's reading, it was clear that he really came to test out an idea that had occurred to him …. To Jakob he seemed guileless yet subtly malicious, as though intent on savoring to the full his own love for Bentham).

He comments elusively on Bentham's seductive skills toward young men that confuse them in the same way in which he confuses their take on the relationship between jurisprudence and history (181). Almost reproachfully, Alistair mentions in the same exchange that a black and white way of thinking is not the right approach to restitutions, that the attempt to reverse the past would mean to continue it (181). To explain his point, Alistair uses an analogy of the loss of a young lover: "Die Schönheit eines Geliebten und dessen Tod, und wie man noch einmal dagegen räsoniere, klug genug, nicht kämpfen zu wollen, wo es aussichtslos sei" (Like a lover's beauty and his death, and the way you rail against it all over again, but are wise enough not to do battle where there is no prospect of success) (181). Alistair exemplifies with the analogy of the dead lover, albeit in an indirect way, how fighting for restitution is a pointless business, since there is no way to bring back the dead. He also alludes to Bentham's younger romantic partner who died in

a motorcycle accident, making Bentham a survivor once more (253). In a rather complex way, Alistair illustrates how Bentham's desirability is connected to the unfathomable trauma. The erotic desire for Bentham is thus linked to the trauma of the past and its irresolvable nature. Jakob's attraction to Bentham evokes the idea that it is driven by an unconscious desire to restitute his inherited guilt, for which he previously attempted to compensate (yet at the same time perpetuated) in his job.

Bentham's past makes him a complex figure who is admired, desired, and maternally cared for at the same time. On one hand he is perceived as a child that needs protection. His secretary, Maude, cares for him maternally with steamed milk and honey every afternoon, and is worried on days when he does not show up to the office (98). As Maude tells Jakob about Bentham's evacuation as a child and his journey to London on his own, she is "noch im Nachhinein ängstlich um das Kind besorgt" (full of anxious concern for Bentham the child, even in restrospect) (182). Thus Maude still sees the abandoned child in the adult lawyer. But her worries also address Bentham's current exposure to discrimination as a gay man, an aspect of Bentham that Jakob realizes when he sees Bentham from afar wearing a flamboyant suit and waiting for someone: "Die Passanten betrachteten ihn verwundert, drängten sich an ihm vorbei, und Jakob war froh, außer Hörweite keine despektierlichen Bemerkungen aufschnappen zu können" (Passersby stared at him in wonderment as they brushed past him, and Jakob was glad to be too far away to catch any of the disparaging remarks) (182). Jakob is similarly worried, albeit relieved to be remote enough to not be affected by discriminatory comments from passers-by. When he sees Bentham engaged in a sexual encounter with a young man at the Ladies Pond at the Heath—although jealous of the young man—he is

not certain whether what he sees is based on mutual agreement or if Bentham is being humiliated by the young man. While what Jakob watches does not indicate any abuse, it is striking that even in what looks like a delightful intimate situation Bentham is assumed to be vulnerable (208).

Aside from being cared for like an abandoned child, Bentham also represents, particularly to Jakob, a paternal authority figure. On his walks in the park with Bentham, he watches the older man, as mentioned above, like a child admiring an authority figure. Moreover, while working at Bentham's law office, Jakob's perspective on the past changes. As Jakob discusses his cases with Bentham, he gets to know a different side of history, as Bentham represents the victim position and has the habit of deconstructing the legal and ethical situation of his cases. Alistair remarks "daß niemand so vollständig einen Rechtsfall zersetzen könne wie Bentham, so, daß nichts übrigbliebe, kein Recht, kein Unrecht" (145). Yet, what Bentham tries to illustrate to Jakob with his deconstructive counterarguments is the complex and irresolvable aspect of history from the victim and survivor's point of view, as his comment on the client Miller's case exemplifies:

> Natürlich, seine Eltern, da er das Glück hatte, daß sie überlebten, wenn man auch seine Großeltern vergast hat. Sie mißverstehen mich. Ich meine nicht, daß er sich nicht um den Wert bemühen sollte, den Gegenwert dieses Hauses, eine Entschädigung in Geldwert. Natürlich. Mich wundert, daß er das Haus will. Diesen Ort, als wäre ein noch unberührter Ort, der zu seiner Geschichte gehört. Als wäre das Alter und die Traurigkeit dort nicht vorgedrungen. Die Traurigkeit und das Entsetzen, daß es keinen Ort gibt, der unberührt geblieben ist, von der Wahrheit, der Kälte. Als gäbe es eine Geschichte, die sich doch zusammenfügen ließe, über all die Jahrzehnte hinweg. (146)
>
> (Yes, of course, his parents, since he was lucky and they survived, even if his grandparents were gassed. You misunderstand me. I'm not saying that he shouldn't try to obtain the value, the equivalent value of the house, in other words monetary compensation. Of course he should. What puzzles me is that he wants

> the house itself. The place, as if it were a place that is still intact, a part of his past. As if old age and sadness hadn't encroached on it. Sadness, and the horror of knowing that no place has remained untouched by the truth, by cold reality. As though there were a past that could still be put back together, after all these decades).

Bentham admits that Miller should receive the monetary value of the house but that nothing else can be restituted. He emphasizes that history is not simply a question of rights, objectivity, and restitution, but is interleaved with memories and emotions that irretrievably alter places, people, and properties; it is a puzzle that, to use Jakob's analogy but contrary to his assumption, *cannot* be reassembled in its original order.

Through the exchange with Bentham, Jakob develops a more differentiated view on the past. In response to Bentham's childhood experience, Maude exclaims "Was für ein Schicksal," yet Jakob shows signs of being more careful with judgments like Maude's:

> Aber Schicksal, dachte Jakob, war eben das falsche Wort. Auch er hatte, wenn er von diesen Geschichten hörte, an Schicksal gedacht, an verhängte Grausamkeit, an Unausweichliches. Die Wiedervereinigung war ihm als Chance erschienen, einen winzigen Teil des Unrechts dem Gesetz doch noch zu unterwerfen. Aber erst jetzt begann er, die Nazizeit als menschengemacht zu begreifen, als Politik, Handlung und Willen. (182)

> (But fate, Jakob thought, was precisely the wrong word. He, too, hearing such stories, had originally thought in terms of fate, of a harsh destiny, of inexorability. He had seen German unification as an opportunity, even at this late date, to apply the rule of law to some tiny fraction of the old justice. But he now began, for the first time, to view the Nazi era as something man-made, as politics, as a product of human action, of the human will).

Jakob's thoughts indicate a change in his perspective on Germany's recent history, and shows it to be significantly influenced by Bentham's more differentiated, critical, and thought-provoking approaches to the time of National Socialism. This influence betrays Bentham's mentoring role in Jakob's life. Yet while Jakob used to think he, as a lawyer

in restitution rights, rectifies history, he does not revisit his role as German lawyer and the purpose of his work in this business once he accepts the impossibility of rectifying history. Instead he increasingly loses himself in his infatuation with Bentham, whose allure results from a combination of his (perceived) vulnerability as victim and his charisma as authority figure.

Jakob's attraction to Bentham grows simultaneously with his disillusion that property restitution is a way to amend history for his Jewish clients, and might be read as a substitute attempt to find meaning in life. Jakob's interest in Bentham is the search for belonging and fatherly love both of which have been compromised in Jakob's life. However, this attempt seems to be futile. Bentham signals to him that he enjoys his company and having him as colleague, but he does not show any signs of intimate interest in the young man (186).

As opposed to Jakob, Bentham is a person who, specializing in being left behind, reaches a mental place of accepting the losses, the displacement, and the lack of "Fazit" (closure) in his life (257). He is able to bear the impossibility of restitution and the sadness that is part of his life. At the same time, he is able to live a fairly good life as an attorney for his predominantly Jewish clients, fighting for their property rights. Contrary to the assumption and worries of his colleagues—Maude's in particular—he enjoys his daily whiskey not to drown his sorrows but to savor as he savors his milk with honey or a walk in the park ("ein Whiskey wäre jetzt gut, es ist so eine nette Gewohnheit" [a whiskey would be just the thing right now. Such a very pleasant custom]) (257). Additionally, when Bentham does not come to work, he follows his late partner's advice to distract himself from the emptiness of his home, goes to a hotel to enjoy what might be

described as a high-end male escort service, of which he is not ashamed but rather describes it as an expedient arrangement (259). Bentham is an outsider with a history of exclusion and trauma, yet, unlike his young German employee, Bentham has been able to introject and accept his painful past. His outlook on life is sober, but not unhappy or desperate. Rather, it is balanced and, at times, pragmatic. It is quite possible that it is precisely the legacy of outsiders in Bentham's past that has provided him with the necessary sobriety and background experience of the marginal places in society in order to find a place in his life where he enjoys a degree of influence and confidence in his existence as outsider.

The only other Jewish character in *Die Habenichtse*, Andras, not only shares Bentham's family history of trauma but also seems to share similarities to Bentham's well-grounded position in life. While Jakob and Isabelle start their newly wedded life in London, they leave Andras, their friend and colleague, behind. Andras' story continues to interweave the London-centered plot. Andras' story is the third narrative complex that involves the motif of the abandoned child. Not only is he left behind in Berlin, but his love for Isabelle is unanswered. Moreover, Andras is originally from Hungary. His parents sent him to West Berlin with his aunt and uncle when he was fourteen (40). He was not told that his trip to Berlin was not only a visit but that it was intended to be permanent. Only months later does he realize that he is not intended to return to Budapest, but rather that he had been abandoned in Berlin. During his subsequent teenage years he spends his free time in the streets of Berlin "[a]lleine oder mit mehreren Jungs auf den Boden spuckend, rauchend, auf Mädchen wartend, wie in einem ewigen Vorort, aus dem man sich wegsehnte, nur weg und kein Wohin" ([a]lone or with a group of lads,

spitting on the ground, smoking, waiting for girls, it was like an eternal suburb that you longed to escape from, just to get away, never mind where to) (41). Andras barely talks during this time, he feels disconnected from his aunt and uncle whom he describes as "Onkel-Gespenst, Tante-Gespenst, zwei lästige, rührende Alte, petrefakt, unpassend wie ein Ponygespann auf dem Ku'damm" (Uncle-ghost, Aunt-ghost, two tiresome yet touching old fossils, as out of place as a pony and trap on the Kurfürstendamm) (41). He indicates that he feels misunderstood by his aunt and uncle, marking a generational breach between him and his guardians (41). What on one hand appears to be the usual life of a teenager with a typical degree of anxiety and feeling misunderstood might on the other hand be interpreted as symptoms of Andras' displacement. Much later in his adult life, after having been back in Budapest, Andras "akzeptierte er...endlich, endgültig, daß es keine Lebensordung für ihn gab, so oder so, ob in Budapest oder Berlin...er war eine Randfigur ein Fremder, ein disziplinierter, unauffälliger Vagabund" (he finally, definitively accepted that he would find no proper place in life either way, whether in Budapest or in Berlin….He was a marginal figure, a stranger, a well-behaved, unobstrusive vagabond) (40). Andras experienced a situation of abandonment when he was sent to West Berlin, from where, due to this being the era before the Perestroika, he cannot return home. He is a stranger in Berlin but when he has the opportunity to return to Hungary, he feels like a stranger there, too.

In addition to the trauma Andras experienced due to his move to Berlin, Andras' life is affected by the traumatizing past of his family as Hungarian Jews. Andras' hesitation to return to Budapest is related to his family's past "sie [the past] war die riesige osteuropäsche und jüdische Katze, ungebeten wuchs sie, beanspruchte Platz. Er

konnte ihr nur ausweichen, in dem er unauffällig an ihr vorbeischlich“ (that gigantic eastern-European-and-Jewish feline, growing unbidden, taking ever more space. He could only avoid it by creeping surreptitiosly past it) (197). Yet his parents sent him to Berlin in order to save at least one child from a communist upbringing, and sent him right there, “wo sie selbst ermordet worden wären” (where they themselves would once have been murdered) (196). Thus the past resides in Berlin as much, if not more, as in Budapest. As a child, Andras draws street scenes of Budapest that he shows Isabelle. These drawings are bizarre and disturbing as they show destroyed houses, people running along streets and either falling into pits or exploding (41; 150). The drawings resemble war scenes of air raid attacks and therefore suggest that Andras expresses vicariously in his drawings the trauma of his parents that haunts the family. Andras shows, however, that he is dealing with his past, as he reflects upon his youth in Berlin, his feeling of abandonment, and his relationship to his aunt and uncle and his parents, as well as in his childhood drawings.

After Isabelle gets married and moves to London, Andras’ abandonment and his sense of displacement are reinforced:

> Und damit war es an der Zeit, alle Hoffnung aufzugeben: Er, Andras, ihr Ritter und treu bis in den Tod, hatte sich selbst zur komisch-traurigen Gestalt gemacht. Wie auf den Leib geschneidert, längst mit ihm verwachsen war diese Rolle. Fahr endlich nach Budapest, du hast hier nichts mehr verloren. (46)
>
> (And this really did mean it was time to relinquish all hope. As her knight, faithful into death, he had turned himself into a tragicomic figure. The role fitted him like glove, it had become part of him. Go back to Budapest. Stop clinging to a forlorn hope).

Isabelle’s decision to marry Jakob and her departure catalyze Andras’ role as vagabond and marginal figure. While Andras appears to share with his German peers a certain

inability to connect to others as he fails to tell Isabelle how much she means to him before she marries Jakob, unlike Jakob and Isabelle, he is described as reflecting on his life in more depth than his two German counterparts. Although he tries to avoid his family's East European Jewish past, he feels deeply connected to it, and his reflections show his recognition of an indispensable causal relationship between his life as a Hungarian Jew living in Berlin and his family's history. Moreover, while Hacker emphasizes Isabelle's and Jakob's choice to ignore the suffering of the less-privileged in their immediate environment, Andras supports and allows a homeless man, Mr. Schmidt, to reside in his attic. Not only does he show continuous concern about Mr. Schmidt, he treats him with respect and care as he visits with him. He takes their conversations seriously and establishes a sincere relationship with someone in need.

In contrast to Isabelle and Jakob, Andras and Bentham seem to show a greater ability to make their personal history relevant to their present life. As Gerstenberger points out, the two Jews in Hacker's novel, "seem to cope better with the absence of roots" and their "historical experience makes them better equipped to deal with the challenges of post-modern society" (108). Moreover, as Bentham says about himself, "being left behind is his specialty," and Andras is described as an eternal vagabond who "akzeptierte ... endlich, endgültig, daß es keine Lebensordung für ihn gab…wie auf den Leib geschneidert, längst mit ihm verwachsen war diese Rolle" (he finally, definitively accepted that he would find no proper place in life … The role fitted him like a glove, it had become part of him. (40, 46). Andras and Bentham both contextualize their current life in the historical experience, which means they maintain an awareness of their experience of abandonment and loss and allow a sense of continuity of the suffering

generated by their experience. Not only do both show a greater ability than Isabelle and Jakob to reconcile the challenges of their current lives, they also—in Andras' case in particular—seem to be able to connect better to and show compassion for people around them. Bentham's and Andras' ability to connect, negotiate, and accept their past shows a degree of self-respect which enables them to be respectful, centered, and, particularly in Andras' case, compassionate people. As Isabelle and Jakob are cut off from their family's past, they are left in an emotional vacuum, which prevents them from maintaining meaningful relationships.

*

While almost all characters show experiences of childhood abandonment in *Die Habenichtse*, each separate experience illuminates a different aspect of a diverse, globalized and thus interrelated yet fragmented postmodern society. Andras' and Bentham's roles as abandoned children represent the Holocaust with its continuous historical importance. Yet, the motif is internationally dispersed and connects different historical and current events. Its narrative frame goes beyond the familial nucleus and expands across an international, German/non-German community. As almost all characters show features of childhood abandonment, non-German and German alike, the text does not render clear victims and perpetrators. Even though Hacker emphasizes the female voice in *Die Habenichtse*, the female is a complex figure and does not solely illustrate feminist concerns. Isabelle becomes a victim of male aggression but bears responsibility for her failure to assist a person in danger. While she breaks with traditional assumptions of a female as caring and nurturing, she is also portrayed as an utterly helpless adult. Sara as female is situated in a completely different context than

Isabelle. Her victimization is mostly provoked by socio-economic issues and youth, regardless of gender. Yet her father is portrayed as the main perpetrator in the family, making her a victim of mostly male aggression.

Isabelle and Jakob's childhood is described as neither happy nor deeply traumatizing, and both families conceal a part of their past, such as the inexplicable illness of Isabelle's mother, or the history of Jakob's family business. The secrets lead to a disrupted relationship with parents, and render Isabelle and Jakob's childhood meaningless and their lives without history. They find a comfort in each other that seems to resolve minor insecurities of their young adult life partially caused by the political change of the *Wende*. The move to London disturbs the couple's comfort and both seem overwhelmed by their London experiences. They simultaneously want more, and something different in life than their self-created space of comfort. Neither appears well-equipped to meet their challenges and desires, and both stumble through the encounters of their London life with the helplessness of children. Formerly stable structures like their marriage and core beliefs, as Jakob's point of view on history, turn out to be illusory.

The illusions, especially Jakob's overhaul of his positivistic standpoint of history, also betray the post-*Wende* timeframe of the novel. Jakob's idea of making history right through restitution not only involves the historical fall of the Berlin Wall, but also reflects the *Wende* euphoria revolving around the idea of freedom and a plethora of opportunities. In turn, Jakob's perspective shift reflects the complexity of this historical event, which comes roughly after a period of ten years during which many of these hopes got shattered. In each of their disillusioned moments, Isabelle and Jakob, instead of reflecting and contextualizing their roles and actions, turn to Andras and Bentham, respectively,

whose family histories are rooted in the Holocaust. And they do so as if seeking the others' experiences and the meaning of their histories to find orientation and fill the gaps in their own lives. But Bentham refuses to give Jakob advice and guidance, and Andras does not respond to Isabelle's call for help, leaving both to make their own choices.

Hacker illustrates through the juxtapositions of various experiences of childhood abandonment how unspeakable guilt and shame, just like unspeakable trauma, perpetuate themselves from generation to generation. Although rightfully innocent, Jakob and Isabelle represent how guilt, in one form or another, gets passed down to subsequent generations. They signify a response to a large part of the German second generation whose reproach towards the war generation for their involvement in the Holocaust implies a line between themselves and their parents' generation, by which the parents were signified as perpetrators while the children saw themselves disconnected from their parents' culpability. Not only does Hacker illustrate the passing on of the repression of shame and guilt, but her text also suggests that the survivors of the Holocaust bear the potential of dealing with their trauma in a much healthier way than the descendants of the perpetrators do with the familial sense of shame.

Jenny Erpenbeck's *Heimsuchung*

Jenny Erpenbeck, like Katharina Hacker, was born in 1967. She grew up in East Germany the daughter of a physicist, John Erpenbeck, and an Arabic translator, Doris Kilias, as well as the granddaughter of Hedda Zinner, who was a writer, and Fritz Erpenbeck, who was the lead dramatic advisor at the Berliner Volksbühne. Erpenbeck's family background has been a source of artistic inspiration for her work, which is

informed by themes of memory, loss, identity, political change, and exile. Yet before becoming a writer, Erpenbeck studied stage direction, directed several plays, and worked as assistant director at the Opernhaus in Graz. *Heimsuchung*, 2007, is Erpenbeck's third novel and is inspired by the life of Hedda Zinner. *Heimsuchung* is not the only of Erpenbeck's works to involve the motif of the abandoned child; other writings by Erpenbeck thematize questions about childhood and childhood abandonment in particular. Her debut narrative, *Geschichte vom alten Kind* (1999), revolves around the mysterious circumstances of a child foundling who evokes questions about identity, one's past, and origin. Her 2004 novel, *Wörterbuch,* also describes the life of an abandoned child. Based on a historical event, Erpenbeck portrays the situation of a child whose parents were murdered during the military coup in Argentina. The child grows up with adoptive parents who were most likely involved in her parents' murder. Erpenbeck's grandmother also inspired her 2009 novel *Aller Tage Abend*, which follows several alternative paths for the life of a half-Jewish Austrian women, exploring through each one of them the complexity of events in the 20th century. Erpenbeck's latest novel, *Gehen, ging, gegangen*, was shortlisted for the German Book Award (2015) and deals with issues revolving around the life of refugees in Germany in the second decade of the 21st century.

The plot of *Heimsuchung* starts in the early 20th century and begins with the disruption of the line of inheritance in a farmer's family due to the lack of a male heir. The farmer, who also maintains a political role of authority (Schulze) in his village, has four daughters and no son. Moreover, none of the daughters' marriage plans work out in a traditional way. Thus no heir marries into the family. The youngest daughter, Klara,

who shows symptoms of distress possibly due to living in a loveless home, is declared legally incapacitated, a move that allows her father to sell her inheritance, the plot of land by the lake, which is the geographical center of the novel. One part goes to a Berlin architect, the second to a Jewish textile manufacturer, and the third to a coffee and tea importer. Klara commits suicide after the sale of her inheritance.

The rest of the book tells the stories of the subsequent owners over the course of the rest of the 20th century into the 21st. The selling of the land by Klara's father happens parallel to the rise of the Third Reich. Shortly after the purchase of their lot, the Jewish family is forced to sell their land in order to have the financial means to leave the country. The architect, a Nazi collaborator, is the buyer who takes advantage of the family's emergency situation and buys the lot well under market value. The textile manufacturer and his wife are not able to leave the country and are killed in the Holocaust, but are survived by a son. Shortly after the war, the architect's wife is raped by a young Russian soldier. Following the regime change, the parcel of land is now part of the GDR. The architect's former Nazi collaboration becomes a problem under the socialist government, so the architect and his wife have to defect to West Germany and the land becomes the home of a Communist writer and her family who had lived in exile in the Soviet Union during the war. After the writer dies, her son rents part of the place to a former political prisoner who had unsuccessfully tried to escape the GDR in his youth by swimming through the Elbe River. Another major political change, the *Wende*, results in the change of ownership of the plot once again: in 1990 descendants of the architect's wife reclaim the property to have the house demolished and sold. Thus the writer's granddaughter, identified by several scholars as Erpenbeck's alter ego, prepares the place

one last time for its change of ownership (Cosgrove, *Heimat as Non-Place* 75).

Heimsuchung is divided in multiple chapters all dedicated to different characters. The narrative is written in fragments and the events are not in chronological order, underlining the disruptive events of the 20th century discussed in the novel. Only a few characters are referred to by name, while the rest remain anonymous and are only referred to by their profession or other indicators of their social role. The third-person narrator remains distanced and unengaging, providing a sober and at times frigid atmosphere.

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Scholarship about *Heimsuchung* predominantly scrutinizes the novel's concept of place, the concept of *Heimat*, and materiality within the context of history. Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman provide a comprehensive assessment of the German concept of *Heimat* in *Heimat: A German Dream: Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture, 1890-1990*. Herein the authors describe *Heimat* as a German-specific identity marker, which is situated between region and nation (5). Its cultural meaning varied in the last 150 years, reaching from representing an antiurbanization, antimodern German desire in the late 19th century, which associated *Heimat* with a bucolic life, to a national association during National Socialism (5). Boa and Palfreyman also illustrate that *Heimat* is associated with the place of birth and at least a larger part of childhood, making it a critical identity marker of the childhood years (6).

Mary Cosgrove examines *Heimsuchung* in her 2012 analysis *'Heimat' as Nonplace and 'Terrain Vague' in Jenny Erpenbeck's 'Heimsuchung' and Julia Schoch's 'Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers'* as a text that reveals *Heimat* as "not natural and

given but negotiated, abstract, and unreliable, because the nature of the contract between individuals and place can and does change, depending on political and historical events" (74). Thus *Heimat* in *Heimsuchung* "subvert[s] the 'hominess'[sic] of the rural setting and the traditional image of *Heimat* to question the relationship between Germans and the territory they inhabit" (67). The connection between *Heimat*, history, and territory gets further worked through in Ariane Hans's 2014 dissertation *Monika Maron und Jenny Erpenbeck: DDR im Zeichen der Moderne*. Hans claims that while

> der dargestellte Ort wiederum als Sehnsuchtsort der erhofften Sicherheit und Stabilität [fungiert], so wird er auch in diesem Roman als Ort in Geschichte und (historischer) Zeit offenbar. In keinem Fall also ist der Ort, in seiner scheinbar provinziellen „Entrücktheit", „Insel" oder gar Paradies. Weder räumlich noch zeitlich ist er der vermeintlichen Außenwelt entzogen, sondern vielmehr trägt er deren Zeichen, fungiert als ihr Spiegel. (134)
>
> (the described locality represents a place of longing for anticipated security and stability, the place also embodies history and (historical) time. In no case, however, is the place, in its provincial remoteness, some sort of island or even paradise. Neither spatially nor temporally is the place detached from the perceived outside world. But rather, it is a chiffre of the outside world and functions as its mirror [translation mine]).

In my analysis I shall reveal that in the center of relationship between place, *Heimat,* and history stands the abandoned child as a symptom of the tension in this relationship. The child connects unquestioningly to the concept of *Heimat* as a place of safety and stability representing the child's need of a holding environment. As *Heimat* in *Heimsuchung* becomes unstable, negotiable, and abstract due to the events of the 20th century, changes in the concept thus disrupt the holding environment and leave her in a state of abandonment. The instability of *Heimat*—actually meant to be a place representing safety, belonging, and identity—hits children the hardest.

Similarly to *Die Habenichtse*, the motif of the abandoned child in *Heimsuchung*

transcends the structure of the nuclear family. It permeates a historical spectrum of different events, several unrelated families, different nationalities, and genders. Yet more so than in Hacker's novel, the abandoned child in *Heimsuchung* represents a connecting element in the historical panorama that not only links one event to the other, but also shows a correlation to place. Childhood and abandonment are thus closely linked to locality—specifically to the idea of *Heimat*, which is represented in the novel by a piece of land at the *Scharmützelsee* in *Mark Brandenburg*. The abandoned child in Erpenbeck's novel signifies the rupture of the order that constitutes a certain geographical place as *Heimat*.

Through her focus on a parcel of land sloping down to the *Scharmützelsee*, Erpenbeck creates a space which serves as a canvas for the projections generated by changes in the 20th- and early 21st-century German societal and political structure: The Wilhelmine patriarchal order falls apart and leaves behind abandoned *Heimat* and abandoned children. The abandoned child in Erpenbeck's novel therefore symbolizes the accumulative effects of the implementation of modernity, which the text portrays as climaxing in the Holocaust. Yet although the Holocaust plays a pivotal role in *Heimsuchung*, the aftereffects of the collapse of paternalism persist, resulting in instability and anxiety regarding the place called *home* well past the unification. The large structural shift from a territorial, patriarchal order to an order dictated by the industrialized modern nation state not only gives the novel the historic frame and links it to the destabilization of the concept of *Heimat*, but also to the abandoned child in the sense that the abandoned child is a child deprived of the traditional notion of *Heimat*. The abandoned child signifies the transience of *Heimat* as a result of the loss of the paternal

structure holding together genealogy and place.

Erpenbeck reflects the far-reaching structural shift from patriarchal order to decentralized industrialization and modernity in her fragmented narrative style that, just like the disruption of heritage and paternal lineage, disrupts the chronological order of the narrative. The narrative describing the lives of those who are most affected and dispersed by these changes is also, significantly, most fragmented. The reader is forced to revisit the descriptions of their lives after having grasped the larger part of the plot in order to assemble the string of events.

The novel portrays the female as more heavily affected by the disruptions of families and *Heimat*, as the abandoned child is predominantly female in *Heimsuchung*. In the article mentioned above, Cosgrove proves that the female on one hand signifies the decline of paternalism due to modernity, but also illustrates female victimization as the result of both the violence inherent in the traditional patriarchal order *and* its decline. Erpenbeck illustrates how the collapse of the old order happens at the cost of the weakest members of that former order (meeting the categories *female*, *Jewish,* and *child*) and does not necessarily grant liberation from subjugation. However, Erpenbeck also challenges this victim's gender determination as she illustrates situations in which the line separating victim and perpetrator congruent with female and male and the political victor and the defeated is significantly blurred.

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In the chapter *Der Großbauer und seine vier Töchter* (*The Wealthy Farmer and his Four Daughters* [all transations of *Heimsuchung* by Susan Bernofsky]) Erpenbeck establishes a strong sense of the patriarchal system that dominates life throughout the end

of the 19th century. The family of the farmer, who originally owns the land by the lake that is at the center of the novel, is genealogically well-rooted in the position of *Schulze* (sheriff) of the village in Mark Brandenburg:

> Der Vater des Schulzen war Schulze, und dessen Vater war Schulze, und dessen Vater war Schulze, und immer so weiter zurück bis sechzehnhundertundfünfzig. Der König selbst hat den Vater des Vaters des Vaters des Vaters des Schulzen zum Schulzen bestellt. (16)
>
> (The father of the mayor was mayor before him, and the father's father was mayor, and the father of his father's father and so on. All the way back to the year 1650. The king himself appointed as mayor the father of the father of the father of the mayor's father).

Erpenbeck shows syntactically how society has been structured for the last several centuries before the effects of industrialization change this linear patriarchal order. The genealogical background of the farmer is embedded in the detailed description of wedding and funeral traditions of the region, illustrating the moving agents of the patrilineal order: weddings, death, and inheritance of land and profession, all of which constitute the traditional notion of *Heimat*.

This stable patrilineal order of life dictated by the paternal figure and his land becomes disrupted with the farmer's four daughters: "Der Schulze hat keinen Sohn. Büdner und Häusler gibt es im Dorf, zwei Kossäthen und einige Bauern, aber nur einen Schulzen" (The mayor has no son. There are smallholders and cottagers in the village, two cottiers and a few farmers, but only a single village mayor) (18). Erpenbeck indicates that with no son and thus a disruption of inheritance, a way of life will come to an end. Moreover, none of the daughters marries, thus do not even continue the paternal line for someone else, and therefore further symbolize the end of the old order. Since none of his daughters' lives comply with the traditional order, the father interferes with violence and

cuts remaining ties to the old way of life. When his second daughter is pregnant from a nonbefitting man to whom she is not married, his paternal violence in response leads to a miscarriage (19). Similarly, as the farmer's fourth daughter Klara shows signs of distress—most likely due to the domestic violence she has been experiencing—he disenfranchises her and sells her land, the lot by the lake. The father, taking advantage of his remaining paternal power, cuts the child off symbolically from the old order. As Klara is declared insane and her lot split in three when her father sells it, the link between genealogy and land and thus the individual paternal power over one's land is symbolically compromised. In response to her disenfranchisement, Klara commits suicide by drowning herself in the wintry lake. The image of Klara's dead body caught in the uprooted tree by the shoreline over- and foreshadows the following events surrounding her former piece of land by the lake: the family is uprooted from its former meaningful tradition of land and family. With Klara's death the novel introduces a new era in which children repeatedly become abandoned, mostly due to the loss of their parental roots or the now uprooted idea of *Heimat* that their parents had in mind for their children and themselves. As Cosgrove points out, contracts between arbitrary people replace a patriarchal order, yet because of their dependence on the current modern jurisdiction—now a system of authority of highly specialized and abstracted roles—they become annulled as fast as they were signed, depending on historical or political changes (74).

A coffee and tea importer, a Jewish textile manufacturer, and an architect sign the contracts of purchase for Klara's trisected lot. Unlike the old fashioned hierarchical agricultural professions of the village (Büdner, Kötter, Bauer), these three imply a new

world in which industrialization has taken over. The families of the three buyers and the following owners signify a different relationship with *Heimat*. The three lots by the lake in most cases of ownership after Klara serve as a temporary, recreational *Heimat*. The concept has adjusted to a globalized and rationalized world in which the individual seeks a refuge from their abstract and specialized roles in industrialized society, in order to recreate their sense of individuality. *Heimat* becomes a commodity and is no longer passed down by the father but designed by the architect:

> Heimat planen, das war sein Beruf. Vier Wände um ein Stück Luft, ein Stück Luft sich mit steinerner Kralle aus allem, was wächst und wabert, herausreißen, und dingfest machen. Heimat .... Ein Haus maßschneidern nach den Bedürfnissen seines Herrn. Essen, Kochen, Schlafen, Baden, Scheißen, Kinder, Gäste, Auto, Garten. (38)
>
> (That's his profession: planning homes, planning a homeland. Four walls around a block of air, wresting a block of air from amid all the burgeoning, billowing matter with claws of stone, pinning it down. Home …. A house made to measure according to the needs of his master. Eating, cooking, sleeping, bathing, defecating, children, guests, car, garden).

The *Heimat* of modernity is taken out of the naturally grown environment, no longer connected to the line of genealogy or subsistence, but produced and marketed in accordance with the current desire of the owner. Ironically, the architect calls the newly purchased piece of land by the lake "die Scholle" (a slice of soil), which is, aside from its agricultural and geological meaning, a synonym for the traditional idea of *Heimat* that includes one's genealogy interwoven with the traditional working of the soil around one's dwelling. Yet the purchase of Klara's lot coincides with the architect's divorce from his first wife and the abandonment of his son (65). The architect lets his future wife sign the contract in order to avoid letting part of the new property go to his former wife or son (66). Not only is the old order disrupted but turned around: purchasing a vacation home

in the country is not an attempt to mimic the traditional idea of *Heimat*, but rather, the new idea of *Heimat* purposefully *entails* the disruption of genealogy and inheritance in the architect's case.

Due to his compliance with the Nazi regime, the architect is able to even enlarge his "Scholle" by taking advantage of the persecution of his Jewish neighbors and buying their land under market value (60). However, the architect's compliance with the Hitler regime and his attempt to get a contract with the Albert Speer project in Berlin becomes a problem when his *Heimat* is occupied by the Soviet Union, and more so when the GDR is established. Despite his attempts to assimilate, the new regime expels the architect; the power of the state is greater than his individual tie to his "Scholle." Yet the effort of his wife's descendants to reclaim the property from the writer's granddaughter after the *Wende* renders the granddaughter displaced and disfranchised in the 21st century. Thus the jurisdiction of the Federal Republic abandons another child by repealing her former parental and political eligibility to take over the property and to continue to dwell in her childhood *Heimat* (175). However, the descendants of the Jewish neighbors do not receive restitution, which may constitute a reestablishing of the jurisdiction of the Nazi regime dominating over that of the Weimar Republic and the GDR.

The greatest impact of disfranchisement hits the family of the Jewish textile manufacturer. While this family is part of the sequence of families dwelling in this place, Erpenbeck uses stylistic and narrative methods to emphasize and set this family apart from the sequence of events at the *Scharmützelsee*. As opposed to the other rather generic characters whose names are not mentioned except for Klara, the members of the Jewish family are addressed by their given names, which increases the personal connection

between characters and reader. Their dwelling differs from the architect's and the importer's house as it is much less substantial. As a boat house the structure does not fit the criteria of *Heimat* to begin with, since it is explicitly not intended for overnight use (56-57). The difference in the way the Jewish family is planning on using the newly bought lot is symbolic of an immanent exclusion of the German *Heimat* idea. Furthermore, as Erpenbeck's writing style becomes increasingly fragmented after the farmer sells Klara's land, the narrative style of the chapter about the textile manufacturer's family is most fragmented, indicating that this family has been particularly affected by the loss of linearity surrounding the traditional idea of *Heimat*. Ironically, the text emphasizes the father's intention of passing on the lot to his son, Ludwig. Particularly, to underline the intention of letting his family grow roots on this piece of land, the textile manufacturer carries out traditional rituals like planting a tree on his son's inheritance as if to reconnect to the traditional idea of *Heimat* rooted in the act of planting. Due to the political persecution, the son is not able to accept his inheritance. He and his wife immigrate to South Africa and his parents become expropriated in the wake of their deportation.

The family of Ludwig's sister Elisabeth, who regularly spends time at the recreational place by the *Scharmützelsee*, is deported and killed in concentration camps. Elisabeth's daughter Doris—who at the time of the purchase of the lot is a small child described as excited about the new place and playing by the lake—is one of the last ones left in the Warsaw ghetto. The girl is twelve years old and barely surviving while hiding in a closet in one of the deserted houses in the ghetto when she is discovered by German police, deported, and shot at a death camp. Multiple aspects of the motif of the abandoned

child culminate in the figure of Doris hiding in the Warsaw ghetto and go beyond the scope of circumstances that describe an abandoned child: she is a victim of persecution, thus abandoned by the political system; an abandoned child due to the victimization of her parents; and displaced from her childhood *Heimat*.

Before the Nazi persecution, the lot at the lake represents the holding environment of Doris' family, as it is a place where the family gets together and where Doris, established in the safe social dynamics of her family, develops her identity and a sense of belonging. Unlike her uncle Ludwig, who is able to escape to safety, the impact of the persecution hits her, as a child, unprepared. The loss of the house by the lake means the unraveling of her holding environment, the displacement of *Heimat* by an utterly hostile place, violence instead of love, the loss of her parents, and finally her own death.

Yet with her killing, the parameters of the motif become an understatement. Doris absolutely counts as an abandoned child and yet the horror of the Holocaust makes the term almost meaningless, as the Holocaust puts the very notion of *abandoned child* when applied to one such as Doris to extreme stress. The inappropriateness of the term *abandoned child* as a description of Doris' victimization illustrates the incommensurability of the Holocaust in the chain of events depicted in the novel. In addition, Erpenbeck emphasizes the chapter about Doris by placing it in the center of the plot, and focusing solely on her individual experience at the Warsaw ghetto and at the death camp. Opposing the fragmented interlacing of her uncle's emigration to South Africa with the plot centered on the *Scharmützelsee*, Erpenbeck describes Doris' abandonment, deportation, and death linearly. Unlike the fragmented style in the rest of the novel, this moment receives narrative weight which pushes the remaining events

slightly into relief. Through the change in setting and narrative style, Doris's situation gains the quality of an image framed by the rest of the novel, which, following Hirsch's assessment of the child figure of the 21st century, draws the reader's affiliative and identificatory attention as it combines all three categories that determine victimhood in Erpenbeck's text: childhood, femininity, and Jewishness. Doris receives further centrality through the dedication of the novel to Doris Kaplan, a German Jewish girl who was deported to the Warsaw ghetto in 1942 and did not survive the Holocaust, on whom Erpenbeck based this character. [1] As the motif of the abandoned child follows a historical panorama of expropriation and disenfranchisement along the political upheavals of the 20th and 21st century, the Holocaust victim is part of the network of political changes, yet Erpenbeck establishes a clearly separate category of affectedness and suffering for this Holocaust victim. Whereas victim- and perpetratorhood are conflated in many of the characters, Doris, along with Klara, is fatally affected while bearing the least responsibility. Erpenbeck underlines characters who are victimized based on multiple categories: being female, being Jewish, and being a child. She establishes a clear hierarchy of victimization which discloses the oppression of women throughout the history of the 20th century while at the same time centralizing the Holocaust.

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Children also voluntarily disrupt the notion of *Heimat* or the parental act of passing on the home in *Heimsuchung*. The son of the Communist writer (who gets the lot after the architect defects to West Germany), identified as *der Sohn*, does not show any

[1]Erpenbeck collaborated with the exhibit *Wir waren Nachbarn* (2009 and ongoing) for which she compiled an album with photos and documents about the life of Doris Kaplan: http://www.digberlin.de/ausstellungseroffnung-im-rathaus-schoneberg-wir-waren-nachbarn/

emotional ties to the piece of land, he does not appreciate the recreational qualities associated with nature that the place offers the rest of his family (174). He is the first child in the novel who voluntarily resigns his inheritance and passes the lot of land to his daughter. The latter (the writer's granddaughter) remembers him mentioning once how the landscape around the *Scharmützelsee* reminds him of someone speaking Russian, the country where he was born during his parents' exile (175). While all other owners of Klara's former lot seem to hold on to the idea of *Heimat* as a place of beauty in a natural environment, the son's childhood experience in Russia is linked to the sense of displacement, which he associates with a rural landscape. This indicates a reversal of the traditional association of *Heimat* with agricultural activity and childhood. In the son's case childhood and rural surroundings are associated with displacement.

In addition to the diffusion of the idea of *Heimat* and displacement surrounding the abandoned child, Erpenbeck employs the abandoned child to illustrate complex victim-perpetrator situations such as the relationship between the architect's wife and the young Red Army soldier. The soldier who is in command of the unit that occupies the architect's house shortly after World War II claims the bedroom of the architect's wife, while she is hiding in her walk-in closet. The German army had killed the soldier's parents and younger sisters and thus made him an abandoned child. Now a young man, the soldier had channeled his rage into his wartime duty which made him a fierce and successful soldier (95). When he finds the architect's wife, he victimizes her, tackles her, and starts raping her. Yet in the moment before the intercourse, he becomes overwhelmed by his own conflicting emotions that conflate his sexual arousal, the moment of sudden closeness and intimacy, and the loss of his family and home (99-100). In the heat of the

moment, when finding contact with the woman's sexual organs, he calls her "Mama" exposing his own status as a traumatized victim, a displaced and abandoned child in need of intimacy and maternal comfort (100).

After trying to fight the soldier off, the architect's wife succumbs to her victimizer, but is able to gain some power over the soldier during the intercourse and takes the chance to urinate on his face: "und in all dem Nassen laufen ihm jetzt Tränen über sein Gesicht, und seine Tränen haben die gleiche Temperatur, wie der große Fluß [of urine], der ihn überschwemmt" (and amid all the wetness tears have begun to flow over his face, and his tears have the same temperature as the great river that is flooding him) (100-101). While exposing his weakness, the soldier's tears evoke a motherly caring side in the architect's wife. She dries his face "[u]nd es fehlte nicht viel, und sie würde ihn mit einem kleine Klaps auf den Po zum Schrank hinausschieben, wie eine Mutter, die ihr Söhnchen auf den Weg zur Schule verabschiedet" ([i]t wouldn't take much for her to push him out of the closet with a little spank, like mother sending her young son off to school) (101). In this moment of rape, usually assumed to be a clear situation of a perpetrator and a victim, the rapist appears to be an abandoned child. Erpenbeck blurs the line between rapist and victim and also crosses the national line between enemies as the abandoned child and victim of war atrocities, the soldier, seeks his mother in his enemy, and the rape victim discovers maternal compassion toward, of all people, her rapist and enemy.

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After the *Wende*, the architect's descendants are awarded rights to the house by the lake and the writer's granddaughter is ordered by law to prepare to hand the house

over. The fact that the Nazis ultimately won, the Jews are victimized again, the same bureaucratic force that disrupts *Heimat* in the first place disrupts it again. The injustice that the text illustrates here is underlined by the destruction of the house, as the architect's descendants do not even bother to live in the house but have it demolished. Due to the architect's being the only Nazi collaborator portrayed in the text, the text creates an association between the West German descendants and Nazism, thus alluding to widespread East German politics of equating West Germany with Fascist Germany.[2]

As the granddaughter of the communist writer prepares the house for the takeover by the descendants of the architect in the post-*Wende* era, the view on the history around the lot receives a nostalgic touch. While the granddaughter is no longer a child, she is the last one to have spent her childhood in the house by the lake and when the house gets destroyed she loses part of her identity associated with communism. The ending of Erpenbeck's novel thus shows signs of a nostalgic subtext about life in the GDR, which was the granddaughter's childhood *Heimat*. The ultimate "abandoned" child thus is the granddaughter, Erpenbeck's alter ego, trying to come to terms with the loss of communism.

Erpenbeck contextualizes life in the GDR and its demise within a wide spectrum of the history of modernity. Through the focus on a particular parcel of land, the effects of the political events of the past hundred years appear repetitive in nature since they entail a reiterating coming and going of unrelated people. Yet the comings and goings do

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[2] For this aspect of East German memory culture compare Gilad Margalit's *Guilt, Suffering, Memory*, in which he describes how, for most of the GDR's history, fascism was seen as a problem situated beyond the borders of the Eastern Bloc. By means of the *antifaschistischer Schutzwall* (Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart), an official East German term for the Berlin Wall, the GDR was, in contrast to the Western states, "de-Nazified" (or at least *declared* de-Nazified) (Margalit 2010, 161).

not follow any natural life cycle or series of free choices, but are instead determined by politics. As Erpenbeck's fragmented narrative style represents, the coming and going is related to a constant uprooting of people's—especially children's—holding environment or idea of home. In the end, however, the Jewish child victim and the East German granddaughter receive most emphasis in this chain of abandonment and loss and evoke the return of a disturbing old East German habit: namely equating the suffering of East Germans to the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust.[3]

Erpenbeck illustrates a panorama of the events of the 20th century and their impact on family and place. She shows how national and global politics render *place,* as in the idea of *Heimat,* an unstable entity. In many cases such politics render the notion of *family* unstable as well. As an intimate domestic space, the parcel of land by the *Scharmützelsee* provides perspective on those who do not stand in the more central places of history. Stationary like a stage, the plot of land presents the drama of the 20th and early 21st century in a back-stage mode. This mode allows Erpenbeck to create complex situations between perpetrator and victim, in which the line separating them starts to fray at times. However, Erpenbeck underlines the female and the child as the main bearers of the instabilities caused by the political and societal changes of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. She thereby deflects the typically male perspective of the struggle with history as represented in the *Väterliteratur*. Her panoramic perspective allows for an understanding of the repetitive victimization of the female regardless of the current

[3] Susanne Vees-Gulani describes in the book chapter *The Politics of New Beginnings: The Continued Exclusion of the Nazi Past in Dresden's Cityscape* (2008) on the bases of Dresden's GDR memory culture revolving around the 1945 bombardment of the city how, firstly, the suffering of Dresden was transferred to the whole of the East German people and, secondly, how East Germans and Jews were conflated to one victim group of fascism as the Western Allies were considered fascists as well.

political system. Like *Die Habenichtse*, Erpenbeck's novel provides a view on Germany's past that appears to be comprehensively contextualized and thus aims at an open-minded and objective approach to understanding the past. However, also similar to Hacker's novel, *Heimsuchung* reveals itself to be more burdened by the past than the sobriety and detachedness of their style convey: beyond what immediately meets the eye, the third-generation perspective discloses signs of repeating their parents' or even grandparents' generation's way of repressing shame and responsibility.

Julia Franck's *Die Mittagsfrau*

Julia Franck, born in 1970 in East Berlin as a twin, spent her childhood in both East and West Germany. When her mother, actress Anna Franck, moved with her two daughters to West Germany, the family spent several months in a refugee camp before moving to northern Germany. At the age of thirteen Franck moved back to East Berlin on her own. Franck studied German Literature and American Studies in Berlin. In 1997 Franck published her debut novel *Der neue Koch* in which a simultaneously awkward and cunning young woman describes her unsuccessful life as the owner of a run-down hotel. Two years later Franck published the novel *Liebediener*, in which the female protagonist becomes involved in a romantic relationship with a man whom she discovers to be a call boy. *Liebediener* was followed by Franck's 2003 novel, *Lagerfeuer*, which describes the situation of East German refugees in the refugee camp *Marienfelde* in Berlin. Her latest novel, *Rücken an Rücken* (2011) (*Back to Back,* 2013), deals with issues revolving around life in East Germany, yet, similar to her 2007 award-winning *Die Mittagsfrau,* it also involves abandoned children and insufficient, absent, or insensitive

parents, particularly mothers. Abandonment is a common theme in all of Franck's novels; it mostly involves parent-child relationships but lovers as well. Her work focuses on women's place in society, familial relationships, failing romantic relationships, memory, and death. *Die Mittagsfrau* deals with familial relationships and the role of women in a German-Jewish family covering the time period from World War I until after World War II.

The novel follows chronologically the life of Helene Wursich who grows up in Bautzen in the Lausitz, a region situated southeast of Berlin in Saxony. Helene's mother is Jewish and mentally ill, suffering from the trauma of four still-born baby boys. While the mother is incapable of providing a loving environment for Helene and her older sister, Martha, the two replace the motherly love they miss with their love for each other. Helene's father succumbs to war injuries after World War I after having been gone for years, leaving his two daughters to care for themselves and their mother on their own. Still a child, Helene takes over the management of the family's printing business and Martha earns money working as a nurse in the local hospital. Due to the decline of the family business, the death of their father, and an increasingly difficult relationship with their mother, Helene and Martha follow their friend and Martha's lover Leontine to Berlin and move in with their Jewish aunt Fanny. While Martha delves into the glamorous urban lifestyle of the Berlin of the Weimar Republic, enjoying the liberal environment, Helene remains an outsider to the atmosphere of alcohol and drugs, partially due to being underage but also due to the desire to focus on her professional life and the goal of studying medicine.

Situated between their traumatizing childhood and the Third Reich, the 1920s are

the primetime for the two sisters, despite Martha's struggle with a drug addiction. Helene falls passionately in love with a Jewish student of philosophy, Carl, with whom she has an equal intellectual exchange and sexual relationship. At the dawn of the Nazi takeover, Carl dies in an accident before the two are able to marry. The political and cultural change and the changes in Helene's life show parallels as she meets a man during her time of mourning who turns out to be an avid Nazi. While her new husband, Wilhelm, first protects Helene from persecution due to his political connections, he is appalled by Helene's previous loss of virginity, and abuses her after he finds out. Now living in Stettin, Helene becomes pregnant from the abusive sexual relationship with her husband. After the child is born, Wilhelm abandons mother and child while Helene works full time as a nurse during the war. Shortly after the war, Helene leaves her seven-year-old son, Peter, on his own on the refugee track going west without mentally preparing him for the separation. The prologue and epilogue of the novel provide Peter's perspective of his and Helene's life in Stettin, his postwar youth with his uncle and aunt in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and an attempted visit by his mother ten years after she abandoned him.

Like Erpenbeck in some ways, Franck creates in her *Die Mittagsfrau* a panoramic perspective in which World War II and the Holocaust are central events but embedded in a larger historical time frame reaching from the dawn of World War I until the early 1950s. However, instead of describing a random group of people whom history brings together, *Die Mittagsfrau* offers a chronological view of the discontinuities of a large part of the 20th century through three generations of one family.

Die Mittagsfrau, which is based on Franck's father's experience of childhood

abandonment,[4] matches Aleida Assmann's characteristics of the family or generational novel, which she describes as a hybrid genre of various voices and type of texts. Furthermore, Assmann states that the narrative is motivated by archival research of family or official documents (*Generationsidentitäten und Vorurteilsstrukturen in der neuen deutschen Erinnerungsliteratur* 26). Scholarly writing about Franck's novel considers the characteristics of the family novel and scrutinizes the ways in which Franck applies them. Some of the writings focus more on the portrayal of familial or gender roles while others emphasize the text as a piece of postwar cultural memory.

In her book *Playing House: Motherhood, Intimacy, and Domestic Space in Julia Franck's Fiction,* Alexandra Merley Hill examines various familial roles in Franck's work. Her focus lies on the female roles of mothers and daughters and claims, by drawing on Judith Butler's gender theory, that motherhood is a performative role in Franck's texts. Hill finds both internalized and manipulated performance, the latter of which can be understood as a sort of rebellion against gender roles. Hill calls Franck's use of it "the mother drag" (in reference to Butler's example of *manipulated performance* in drag), which is expressed in either a "poor or exaggerated performance of the maternal that destabilizes that very role" (11). While Hill focuses on Franck's negotiation of motherhood and views the failure as a rebellious act, Agnes C. Mueller underlines in *The Inability to Love* the failure of mothering as an anti-Semitic subtext, in which Jewish mothers are portrayed as negative and dangerous (to the German, primarily non-Jewish male). Furthermore, Mueller points out the fading of Jewishness throughout the novel and

[4] In an interview by the Rheinische Post (*Julia Franck suchte nach der Oma*), Franck reveals that her motivation to write *Die Mittagsfrau* was driven by the question of how a mother (her grandmother) could abandon her child.

the lack of portraying Jewish suffering as "emphasizing German memory over Jewish memory" (69). Marijan Bobinac and Frauke Janzen focus less on the role of the female and more on the interlacing of history and individual memory with the help of fictionalization. In *Am Herzen erblindet: Zur Inszenierung der Geschichte in Julia Francks Roman 'Die Mittagsfrau'* (2012), Bobinac states, "[i]n Francks Roman steht somit sowohl die Darstellung überindividueller Erfahrungen einer als traumatisch angesehenen Vergangenheit als auch die Last eines (nicht nur) individuellen Traumas im Mittelpunkt" (Franck's novel thus focuses on the supra-individual experience of a traumatic past, as well as the burden of (not only) individual trauma [translation mine]) (164). Janzen points out in, *'Erinnerungen' der Dritten Generation - Vergangenheitsentwürfe in Julia Francks Die Mittagsfrau* (2012) that Franck fills a communicative void between the abandoned son and his mother with fiction based on archival research, which reveals her third-generation perspective. Both scholars emphasize a reciprocal enrichment of both the understanding of history and individual trauma through the interface of familial memory and historical facts.

Looking at Franck's texts through the lens of the abandoned child motif shows that, out of all three texts in this chapter, this generational novel most predominantly depicts the issue of motherhood in relation to the abandoned child. Discontinuities are as much reflected in the situation of the abandoned child as in the role of the mother. As Gerstenberger points out, the effect of the disruptions mainly caused by historical events lead to failed family relations (*Fictionalization* 102-5). As in *Austerlitz*, Franck correlates the situation of the abandoned child to the situation of the mother as victim, but, unlike

Sebald, Franck also includes the mother as perpetrator as the title indicates.[5] The situation of childhood abandonment oscillates with the role of women in general and motherhood in particular so much that the victimization of women and the abandoned child are two sides of one coin. While the situation of abandonment represents, as Janzen points out, the void in the family history which is no longer accessible, Franck fills this gap yet with another childhood abandonment experienced by the mother.

While I partially agree with Mueller's assessment of the problematic negativity that is associated mostly with Selma Würsich, Helene's mother, it seems clear that in the figure of Selma, Franck has created a more sensitive and nuanced situation. Corresponding to the trauma caused by Selma's lost babies, Franck creates through vivid diction a symbolic fabric surrounding Selma that alludes to a fundamental imbalance in her life and provides a comprehensible subnarrative to her behavior. Selma obsessively collects things to the point where she is described as being more drawn to dead things than any live person: "Die Mutter sei am Herzen erblindet….Sie könne nur noch Dinge wahrnehmen, keine Menschen mehr, deshalb sammele sie die alten Töpfe, die löchrigen Tücher…" (Mother's heart has gone blind, Martha had once said….She can only see things, not people anymore, that's why she collects those old pots and pans, scarves with holes in them…[all translations of *Die Mittagsfrau* by Anthea Bell]) 119. After her last son dies shortly after birth, Selma holds on to the dead body for several days before she can be persuaded to let go. Like a repetition compulsion, Selma holds on to the dead things she collects: "[s]ie drückte die Hutschachtel an ihre Brust wie einen verlorenen

[5] The *Mittagsfrau* (midday lady) is a ghost-like baneful figure in Slavic myths commonly portrayed as visiting rural workers in the fields during lunch time to strike them with illness or death. See *Das Vermächtnis der Mittagsfrau: Sorbische Kunst der Gegenwart*. Bautzen, Germany: Stiftung für das Sorbische Volk, Domowina-Verlag, 2003.

Sohn" ([s]he clasped the hatbox to her breast as if it were a prodigal son) (40), in order to "revive" them in a possible eureka-moment of finding a new purpose for them (119-20, 79).

It is probably no coincidence that the Würsichs live in the Tuchmacherstraße (clothier street), as Selma's world of collected things is mostly made of fabric, like old hats she inherited from her uncle, a milliner, and for whom she modeled (49). She collects old garments, dresses, cloths, and blankets in her "mütterliche Landschaft aus Kleiderresten" (maternal landscape, consisting as it did of remnants of clothes) most of which have holes, are torn, or half eaten by moths (81). Clothing, particularly hats, is closely linked to a person's identity. In Selma's case they are desolate and wretched reflecting her mental state. The clothes that Selma collects are her Jewish identity. She lives in an interfaith marriage in which she alone practices her faith. Her daughters are baptized and go to church with their father on Sundays. The two girls know nothing about their mother's Jewish background and appear shocked when they find out (64). Although Selma seems to ignore it, she is shunned in the Bautzen community; the people don't call her by her name but refer to her as "the stranger," while her husband, Ernst Ludwig, is highly respected in town (36). All the children who symbolize her origin by resembling her die, while the two girls, mostly resembling their blond and blue-eyed father, live. This unfortunate coincidence explains her rejection of her daughters as part of her struggle with her Jewish identity (64, 66).

When Selma's last baby dies, "hatte [sie]...ein langes Kaddisch gesprochen. Obwohl es niemanden gab, der Amen sagte, der mit ihr trauerte" ([she] recited a long *Kaddish*...although there was no one to say amen, no one to join her in mourning) (64).

Selma has no community to share her grief, not even her family; she is isolated from her faith through which she attempts to mourn her loss. Her trauma and the two different gods in her marriage make her doubt her belief "als rivalisierte ihrer beider Glaube [hers and her husband's]" (as if their faiths were rivals) (123). Selma starts doubting religion in general and describes humans believing in God as parasitic worms, adopting the defamation commonly used against Jews by anti-Semites (122). Selma betrays here that her emotional instability is related to her discrimination as a Jew. It consumes her life, even her marriage, like the moth larvae eating her clothes. The dilapidated, worm-eaten, and discarded things she accumulates resemble society's view of her as junk. Although Selma and Ernst Ludwig show a strong emotional bond, symbolically speaking, Selma's Chuppah[6] is in the same desolate condition as all the other cloth items she gathered: dealing with her belief in an interfaith union in a largely anti-Semitic community leads Selma into a mental crisis.

Selma's situation is also one of abandonment, albeit not of a child but of a religious and ethnic minority in the first half of the 20th century in Germany. Thus the chain of abandonment, which Franck creates to make sense of her family history, is not rooted in the "evil" Jewish mother but in the perpetual discrimination and persecution of Jews, especially Jewish women. Rather than the product of unconscious anti-Semitic imagination, the character of Selma is deeply traumatized by anti-Semitism and thus the dysfunction of her motherhood sets off the chain of abandonments that continues and culminates in the abandonment of Helene's son's life.

Helene partially adopts her mother's struggle, although she actively fights it. She

[6] A Chuppah is a traditional Jewish item resembling a cloth canopy under which traditional Jewish couples get married. It symbolizes the couple's future home.

is repeatedly described as fearing turning into an abuser like her mother: "Helene spürte die alte Furcht in sich aufkommen, sie könne eines Tages erblinden wie diese Mutter" (Helene felt her old fear that some day her heart might go as blind as her mother's) (122). It is a fear that accompanies her life, especially when becoming a mother herself. After her father dies (of complications caused by his battlefield injuries of World War I), Helene does not fear being exposed to her mother's abuse without the compensating presence of her father, but rather fears a potential emotional attention that could lead to a possibly contagious touch that could pass on her mother's illness (122). In this fear Helene reveals a recurring nightmare in which she dreams of two gods both resembling Apollo who fight for their right to exist. Helene can only turn to one of them while turning her back on the other one, which leads to a dilemma. In this dilemma Helene's dream turns dark and in her attempt to feel her way out she keeps falling into hot slippery material, like slugs, resembling a womb (122). She draws the conclusion herself that her mother's religious dilemma and mental issues have been psychically passed on to her (123). In order to, symbolically speaking, avoid falling back to her mother's womb, to avoid being overwhelmed by her emotions like her mother, Helene pursues the Apollonian path, and self-control and rational decision-making lead her adult life.

Helene's becoming a mother coincides with the war years, the worst of her husband's abuse and his subsequent departure, leaving her and the child on their own. It is during this time, after Helene has gone through tremendous hardship and trauma, when Helene reveals signs resembling her mother. As her son Peter asks her, "Mutter! Sag was. Warum sagst du immer nichts?" ([m]other, say something. Why don't you say something?), he points out her increasingly reclusive behavior, which Helene experienced

with her mother who was in general emotionally unavailable to her children (384).

Helene starts to draws parallels between herself and her mother when interacting with her child. In a moment of exhaustion, Helene "riss [Peter] den Löffel aus der Hand und hätte ihn am liebsten auf den Tisch geknallt, sie musste an ihre Mutter denken, das böse Funkeln in den Augen ihrer Mutter, Helene legte den Löffel auf den Tisch" (snatched the spoon away from him and felt like slamming it down on the table. She thought of her mother, the angry light in her eyes, her unpredictability. Helene laid the spoon gently on the table) (387). Her reaction reminds Helene of her own experiences of abandonment, neglect, and abuse by her mother, as Selma was unpredictable in her verbally and physically violent outbreaks against her daughters. Helene's interaction is dominated by the fear of becoming like her mother to the point where she doubts that she can be any good for Peter:

> Was konnte sie ihrem Peter sein? Und wie konnte er ihr Peter sein, wenn sie ihm nichts sein konnte? Eine andere Frau würde weinen, vermutete Helene.Vielleicht stimmte, was Wilhelm behauptete, vielleicht war ihr Herz ein Stein. Kalt, eisig, eisern. (397)
>
> What could she be to her Peter? And how could he be her Peter if she couldn't do anything for him, if she couldn't speak or tell stories or say anything to him? Another woman, Helene suspected, would weep at this idea. Perhaps what Wilhelm said was right, perhaps her heart was a stone. Cold, icy, hard as iron).

At this point, Helene sees herself like her mother, which influences her decision to send her son off. Like a crescendo, violence, victimization, and traumatization increase in Helene's life during the years with Wilhelm in Stettin, coinciding with the Nazi era and its increase of racist violence and war brutality. The crescendo prepares the reader for the rupture between mother and child, which Helene sees as the only way to save Peter from her: "[e]s sollte ihm an nichts mangeln, deshalb musste er fort, fort von ihr" ([h]e must

want for nothing, that was why he must go, go away from her) (416). Helene makes a rational decision, in this case to save her child. She wants to save the child from the emotional deterioration of his mother: the situation which made her own childhood so full of suffering. Ironically, this decision based on her own experience turns out to be an unsurmountable trauma for Peter.

The perspective change between the prologue and the main text illustrates the breach between mother and child, and the epilogue further emphasizes the breach by describing Helene's visit at Peter's postwar home, his aunt and uncle's farm, ten years after she abandoned him. Still deeply hurt and unable to forgive his mother, Peter hides from her during her visit and decides not to see her ever again (428). He continues the breach initiated by his mother by adopting the same coping mechanism of retreat and isolation. The break between mother and child renders a tension that is not an uncommon result of the historical discontinuities of the 20th century and for which cultural narratives have tried to compensate.

The abandonment of Peter in the prologue introduces the novel, and Helene's life towards that event with its cumulative causes and effects becomes an extensive elucidation of that decision. The narrative in this case does not originate in the child's position, which would possibly reveal an accusation. Instead it derives from a third perspective, someone temporarily removed and disconnected from mother and child. Prologue and epilogue pose the question: what brought a mother to abandon her seven-year-old child? The main text provides an extensive answer which does not resolve the breach between mother and child, but which provides the contemporary reader with a far-reaching and coherent perspective of what leads up to such a breach. Franck chooses to

fill the void by fictionalizing a narrative of perpetuated abandonment and loss starting with the early 20th-century discrimination against a Jewish mother in a hybrid family. The coherence is created by personalizing a story that follows the cultural impacts of major 20th-century events and thus creates a rich and comprehensible linear narrative.

By creating a German female character with a Jewish background, Franck doubles the victim status and therefore increases the potential for the reader's understanding and empathy. While the creation of a German-Jewish background might contribute to the richness of the narrative, from a historical standpoint, due to the comparatively small number of German mothers with a Jewish background, Helene is not a representative example of a German wartime mother who abandoned her child. Franck follows a trend in contemporary German literature that increasingly depicts marriages or romantic relationships between non-Jewish Germans and Jews that might be described as an attempt at normalizing the past. Aine Zimmerman describes in her 2008 dissertation *Estranged Bedfellows: German-Jewish Love Stories in Contemporary German Literature and Film* a chronological trend in the depiction of German non-Jewish and Jewish couples that aims at individualization of these hybrid relationships. According to Zimmerman, post-*Wende* German cultural texts portray German non-Jewish characters who are completely dissociated from perpetration (194-96). Particularly female non-Jewish Germans stand out due to conciliatory qualities and dissociation from the Nazi past.[7] This gender configuration described by Zimmerman does not apply to Helene, yet the conflation of Jewish victim legacy and German wartime experience can be attributed to the prevalent diffusions of themes and discourses in the works of the women writers

[7] See chapters III and IV in Zimmerman in particular.

discussed here.

On one hand the abandoned child motif in *Die Mittagsfrau* marks the void in the family history portrayed in the novel. On the other hand, Franck uses the motif to retroactively and creatively fill in the void by describing a self-perpetuating chain of abandonment, which is meant to explain the breach. As the abandoned child is strongly associated with the mother role in *Die Mittagsfrau*, Franck's use of the abandoned child motif to fill the gaps follows precisely Marianne Hirsch's characterization of "familial and, indeed, feminine tropes [as] [rebuilding] and [re-embodying] a connection [to the past] that is disappearing" (48). As a powerful symbol of adults' "fantasy, fear, and desire," the abandoned child thus represents the breach in, as well as the (fictionalized) mending of, a family narrative (162). However, explaining Helene's abandonment of her child with the conflation of her victimization as a woman with a Jewish background and her own childhood trauma caused by her deranged Jewish mother makes Jewishness in *Die Mittagsfrau* an ambivalent identity marker.

Not only does Franck relate the problems revolving around the abandoned child to the problems rendered by the victimization of the female in her generational portrait of mothers, sisters, daughters, and a son, but this symbiosis of a suffering female and her child also conflates German Jewish victimhood with German wartime suffering. As the influence of fictionalization is mostly recognizable in the attempt to interlace discontinuities in the mother-child nexus, it creates a complex and vivid emotional situation as a cause-and-effect relationship between the events. The abandoned child turns into a major literary device of fictionalization and blurrs the Jewish victim legacy with German war experience for the purpose of serving the contemporary need to make

sense out of history and for enhancing the narrative effect. Thus, Franck creates a compelling, comprehensive, and vivid narrative of the past at the cost of the sensitivity for certain ethical frameworks that require a more accurate differentiation between Holocaust experience and German wartime narratives.

Conclusion

The women writers discussed in this chapter reflect a radical departure from the parameters of memory culture revealed in the literature of the seventies and eighties. The abandoned child motif is not exclusively tied to one generational conflict in which the parent generation is witness to World War II or the Holocaust as all of the texts contain temporally more expansive narratives than the texts discussed in the previous chapter. Thus the texts in this chapter provide a much larger scope that embeds World War II and the Holocaust in an expansive reflection of the history of the 20th century.

The motif of the abandoned child in these texts is no longer a centralized single figure, but rather childhood abandonment is an experience multiple figures have gone through throughout the wider spectrum of history that these texts represent. For the most part, the motif is still a symptom of the ruptures and discontinuities of the 20th century. Yet, due to the wider contextualization of historical events that all the texts under consideration have in common, the motif represents the interconnectedness of history at the same time. The writers represented in this chapter deploy the abandoned child motif in order to fill in otherwise incomprehensible gaps, or to illustrate the repetitive nature of the victimization of the most vulnerable members of society during the 20th century.

As part of emphasizing the most vulnerable of society, the female plays a more

significant role than the heretofore dominant father figure. All three texts in this chapter give women a strong voice. Yet the categorization as victim is more ambivalent. Women in this chapter enjoy a degree of agency and influence on the events around them, but most women are also portrayed as victims in a still male-dominated century. While neither of them reveals a specific feminist agenda, all three texts signal the importance of the female as a historical voice.

While the novels discussed here emphasize the vulnerability of children and women throughout the history of the 20th and early 21st century, they unveil their own liabilities. Although many scholars describe the third generation's approach to the past as less weighed down by personal burden and therefore freer, more nuanced, and sober, my analysis of the abandoned child motif in these novels reveals that behind their sobriety and sense of detachedness from the past still lies a form of unresolved burden.

Looking at Hacker's *Die Habenichtse* through the lens of the abandoned child exposes the third generation's mimetic reenactment of their grandparents' mechanism of repression by focusing on economic success and consumerism. The abandoned child motif in *Heimsuchung* reveals the return of problematic aspects of former East German memory culture, which entails the equation of West Germany with fascism and the perceived exclusion from fascism in East Germany as well as the equation of East German war and postwar experience with Jewish suffering. Finally, Franck's attempt to understand the grandmother's decision in *Die Mittagsfrau* to abandon her young child results in a problematic conflation of German war experience and Jewish victim legacy. This conflation, while plot-enhancing and essential for the comprehension of the boy's abandonment, potentially leads to an understanding of the German past which is not

representative of the demographic picture of that time and ultimately tends to support an exculpatory over-identification with the victims. Despite these texts' reputation of representing a freer and less burdened view of World War II and the Holocaust, the abandoned child motif—in the context of German cultural memory texts—reveals that the texts under consideration still bear ambiguity about their position toward the past, and do not quite live up to their reputation.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORICIZING, CONTINUITIES, AND A NEW GENERATION'S PERSPECTIVE: ABANDONMENT IN TEXTS BY HERRNDORF, KRECHEL, AND LEO

The novels discussed in Chapter 3 contextualize the motif of the abandoned child in a much broader social network than the texts discussed in Chapter 2 as well as experimenting with and fictionalizing multigenerational and multiperspective approaches to the past. The texts considered in this chapter, Wofgang Herrndorf's *Tschick* (2010) (*Why We Took the Car,* 2014), Ursula Krechel's *Landgericht* (State Justice, 2012), and Per Leo's *Flut und Boden* (High Tide and Soil, 2014) and *Der Wille zum Wesen* (The Will to *Wesen*, 2014) continue the panoramic contextualization of the abandoned child motif into the second decade of the 21st century. These texts have in common two features which correspond to the process of contextualization. The use of the abandoned child figure in all texts shows decisive features: further steps toward historicizing World War II and the Holocaust while, at the same time, decentralizing their main events. All texts reveal a shift in focus from the centrality of World War II and the Holocaust toward a historical or cultural aspect that is not completely unrelated to the Holocaust, but has heretofore received less attention. In their approach to these new aspects, the texts under

consideration tend to be less experimental in their narrative style compared to the texts discussed in Chapter 3, but are more cautious in their configuration and ways of fictionalization. The motif of the abandoned child is part of the decentralized perspective on the past and even describes – besides a person--in some cases an aspect of history that has been abandoned. As if to ensure doing justice to the less common topics that the texts deal with, they approach their questions through a conventional or reliable narrative style as if to underline narrative and historical coherence and to provide insight into social realities in the present and past without the distraction of a fragmented or experimental narrative style.

The increased tendency to historicize has also had an impact on the gender pattern portrayed in the texts discussed in Chapter 4. While the first decade of the 21st century saw a surge of female voices, the literary world of the third decade after the *Wende* shows a relatively diverse depiction of both genders. All three texts deal more or less intensively with historically far-reaching paternal structures and their after-effects. Herein may be the reason that the male perspective is more dominant. Yet all texts critique the unchallenged perseverance of paternal structures, and therefore male-centered perspectives in general. In all texts, female voices, even in those where they are less prominent (*Flut und Boden*, *Der Wille zum Wesen*), are portrayed as a positive counterpart to male-centered legacies and, in part, as better prepared to deal with those legacies.

Similarly to the ways in which gender is portrayed in Herrndorf's, Krechel's, and Leo's texts, generational patterns are diverse as well. While the second chapter exposed a generational shift of writers addressing World War II and the Holocaust, the third chapter increases the multigenerational perspective on history. While Wolfgang Herrndorf (1965)

is a member of the so-called third generation (*Enkelgeneration*), the protagonist in his 2010 young adult novel *Tschick* represents one of the first fourth-generation perspectives. Ursula Krechel (1947) with her 2012 novel *Landgericht* depicts a return of the second generation. It is not only her own affiliation with that age cohort that evokes the return, but also her postwar themes revolving around Germany's economic recovery and simultaneous infiltration of former Nazis in public life, which in some regards resemble issues addressed by Treichel in *Der Verlorene* and Sebald's *Austerlitz*. Yet her protagonists belong to the German-speaking first generation victims. Finally, Per Leo's 2014 literary essay *Flut und Boden* and his 2013 academic text *Der Wille zum Wesen* represent a third-generation perspective on the German war generation. Parallel to the increase of multigenerational perspectives, childhood abandonment is neither portrayed as an immediate experience related to World War II, nor is it uniformly related to large-scale disruptions of the 20th century in general. Continuing the trend of the texts discussed in the previous chapter, abandonment's contexts have increased in diversity.

The abandoned child motif in the novels discussed in Chapter 3 still showed in various ways a connection between World War II either to the texts' narrated present or to the author's autobiographical situation. While those texts transcend the bipolar structure of texts by the second generation, they nonetheless underline the familial, multigenerational connection to World War II and the Holocaust. The use of the motif in texts analyzed in this chapter is characterized by critical deviations from and disruptions to this connecting line. The alteration of the multigenerational link from World War II to the present is reflected in a number of important characteristics. These include a complete lack of the familial connection to World War II, a gap between the narrated event

involving World War II and the narrating present, or deviating from the familial discourse by historicizing it through the use of objective and academic sources. Through these characteristics of disconnect, *Tschick*, *Landgericht*, *Flut und Boden*, and *Der Wille zum Wesen* show to various degrees an increased tendency toward historicizing World War II and the Holocaust.

Besides the deviation of the familial line, the above-mentioned texts also include a form of deviation from the association of the abandoned child with a victim. In addition to being a victim in certain social or historical events, the abandoned child is also portrayed as experiencing a long-needed developmental benefit from being left alone as shown in the protagonist of Herrndorf's *Tschick*. In Krechel's *Landgericht*, the two protagonists suffer more from various aspects of abandonment as parents than their children, and Leo conflates the abandoned child motif with German perpetratorship. Thus the evaluation of the abandonment of the child not only focuses on victimization and traumatization but has increased in diversity and in nuance.

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While Krechel's *Landgericht*, and Leo's *Flut und Boden* and *Der Wille zum Wesen* are texts that predominantly deal with themes within the context of postwar German memory culture, Herrndorf's *Tschick* is primarily a coming-of-age adventure novel dealing with the integration problems of immigrants in contemporary Germany and engages in themes related to the past. As Susanne Vees-Gulani and Laurel Cohen-Pfister describe in *Generational Shifts,* the global geopolitical situation of the late 20th and early 21st century has greatly diversified Germany's demographics, turning the country into a place of increased multicultural and multiethnic exchange (14). *Tschick* represents two

sides of the absence of parental care, one which indeed qualifies as abandonment and one which provides the opportunity for growing one's independence. Moreover, the picture of the parent generation that the novel provides is that of utter failure. Belonging to the so-called *Enkelgeneration*, the parent generation in this novel is described as helpless and insufficient in finding their place in a rapidly changing globalized framework, let alone helping their children to adjust. In a situation of being on their own without their parents' guidance, the children suggest far more promising responses to the ambiguities and complexities which the changes of a transnational context bring along.

More centered on World War II and the Holocaust, Krechel's and Leo's texts need to be analyzed with particular attention to the medium of memory on which they are based. Torben Fischer, Philipp Hammermeister, and Sven Kramer provide in their introduction to *Der Nationalsozialismus und die Shoah in der deutschsprachigen Literatur* (2015) the following characterization of the novel dealing with the Holocaust in the 21st century:

> So unterschiedliche Texte ... eint die Fiktionalisierung von verbürgtem historischen Geschehen in einem Modus der Recherche, der die Historizität dieser Ereignisse mit sichtbar werden lässt. Diese Experimente an den Grenzen der Fiktionalität sind in unmittelbarem Zusammenhang mit dem geschärften Bewusstsein für die Materialität der Erinnerung in der Gegenwartsliteratur insgesamt zu sehen. Nicht nur die selbstreferentielle Erkundung der Rolle von Literatur in erinnerungskulturellen Zusammenhängen ist zum Thema der literarischen Texte geworden, auch die Bedeutung speichernder Erinnerungsmedien insgesamt. (19)
>
> The common denominator of these diverse texts is the fictionaliztion of factual historical events through the method of research, which reveals the historicity of these events. These experiments at the threshold of fictionalization need to be viewed within the context of a sharpened awareness for the materiality of memory, which contemporary literature reflects in general. Not only do literary texts thematize the self-referential examination of the role of literature within the framework of cultural memory, but media archives in general (translation mine).

Both Krechel's and Leo's texts reflect increased awareness for the materiality of memory. They rely heavily on research-based sources that define the texts more than the authors' use of fictionalization.

Krechel's recent novels are based on comprehensive archival research, which she explains as an important basis for an appropriate way to approach forgotten trauma: "'Wenn es um traumatische Vergessensleistungen der deutschen Geschichte geht, finde ich es ganz unangemessen, zu viel zu erfinden. Das heißt: Ich zügele mich in meiner Fantasie'" (When dealing with a traumatic effort of forgetting I find it inappropriate to invent too much. Therefore: I rather restrain my fantasy) (quoted in "Die Archivarin des Verdrängten"). While the novels discussed in the previous chapter did not show hesitation about fictionalizing the past, Krechel discloses moral concern over inventing the past. Meanwhile, Krechel's archival research also reflects the almost ubiquitous absence of witnesses and the necessity of accessing the past via other sources with a material connection to it.

The abandoned child in Krechel's novel is tied to the "traumatic effort of forgetting." Writing from the perspective of a generation who used to see itself as a generation of abandoned children, in the 10s of the 21st century the situation undergoes a reversal in Krechel's text: the parents are the ones abandoned. Compared to the reproachful texts by writers of the second generation in the 1970s and 80s (a time in which Krechel was politically and literarily active), the parent generation in this text receives a much more nuanced and empathetic evaluation. Krechel's text requires a reading that contextualizes it within the framework of the generational conflict of the late 1960s and 70s as important concepts within the text, including the abandoned child,

represent a reassessment of that conflict. Moreover, the parents' story in *Landgericht* is linked to an entire group of people, and therefore to a chapter of history, that has received little attention in German literature.

While Leo writes a familial perspective of the past in *Flut und Boden,* writing about his family's Nazi legacy from the autobiographical position of the grandchild, he finds a more reliable way to support his assessment of the past; his text *Der Wille zum Wesen* is a scholarly counterpart to his family essay and, similarly to Krechel's archival work, serves as a form of verification of his perspective. In *Flut und Boden*, the abandoned child is represented by a person whose situation of abandonment is linked to a form of thinking described in *Der Wille zum Wesen*. Leo describes this form of thinking as inherent to German history of thought revolving around the concept of *Bildungstradition*, the evolution and cultural value of the German concept of education and individual development (*Bildung*).[1] The implied connection between Leo's family's

[1] For an introduction to the German concept of *Bildung* see Rolf Selbmann's *Der deutsche Bildungsroman* (1994). Selbmann elaborates that before the secularization of *Bildung* in the 18th century, *Bildung* revolved around human engagement with God as ideal. In this context *Bildung* received its multifaceted meaning as it includes imitation of God, the image of God, as well as the form of God, and formation and development according to God's will, to name a few (1). Selbmann continues with his history by stating that, corresponding with the Enlightenment in the middle of the 18th century, *Bildung* underwent secularization which included elements in the process of *Bildung* that were immanent to nature. *Bildung* becomes an internal and individual process which not only replaces the former redemptive focus but questions *Bildung* as tied to any institution. *Bildung* is thus situated in the area of tension between nurture and nature (2). As an open-ended process, *Bildung* of the late 18th century reflects a new idea of man that includes three aspects: the ideal of antiquity (Winckelmann), the link to metamorphosis (Goethe), and the idea of an aesthetic antirevolutionary education (Schiller) (2). In a further argument, Selbmann notes that before *Bildung* succumbed to a status symbol following the Prussian education reform, retrospective elements fostered by the ideal-utopic emulation of antiquity and the antirevolutionary reaction to the ongoing politics had an influence on *Bildung*. Following Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795), proponents of the classicist idea of *Bildung* see the requirement of social change in the formation (*Bildung*) of the individual mind as opposed to the revolutionary idea of social change as the requirement of *Bildung* (4).

For a comprehensive history of *Bildungstradition* and German *Philhellenism* until the so-called Third Reich, see Suzanne Marchand's *Down from Olympus: Archeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (2003). Marchand elaborates on the historical implications of the German idea of *Bildung* of the late 18th and early 19th century. Marchand argues that due to the lack of a centralized national identity and the sense of inferiority regarding Germany's status as colonial power, German national identity has been

history and his academic text follows an approach which evokes aspects of the academic *Sonderweg*-debate (Special Path) of the 1970s and 80s in which scholars intended to reveal a causality between 19th-century German politics and the Holocaust. In the scholars' attempt at a causal explanation of the Holocaust, the *Sonderweg*-debate itself represents an effort to historicize the past and thus contextualizes Leo's texts within this approach.

All the texts examined in this chapter show an attempt to link or knit together previously unresolved ruptures, the heretofore repressed—or unexplained—paradoxes, whereas the texts discussed in the second chapter rather emphasize to various degrees the breaches and disruptions of the 20th century in a fragmented, nonengaging style. The narrative gesture of filling in the gaps corresponds with a focus on objectivity and to a motivation for optimal traceability and comprehensibility. This style expresses an increased emotional distance and neutrality toward the events of the past portrayed in the texts, which have, in these writers' approaches, undergone a shift from family dramas dealing with the past to novels dealing with historical themes.

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based on a conflation of classical culture and the idea of *Bildung*. Therefore, Germany's *Bildungstradition*—rooted in the knowledge about the classical past as a main pillar in German national culture—is closely related to the historical problem of the so-called *German question* and what was later termed *Sonderweg*. While first a main pillar of German idealism promoted by the work of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), German philhellenism entered the educational system with the emergence of classical philology. This elite scholarship was soon institutionalized by Wilhelm von Humboldt as a requirement of secondary education in Prussia. As the "cultural philosophy of the Prussian state," philhellenism became the foundation for the academic life and bureaucracy in Prussia (28). While Marchand generally argues that the rise of National Socialism introduced by *völkisch* philosophers and education reformers such as Paul de la Garde disrupted the tradition of German philhellenism, Helen Roche emphasizes the continuity of philhellenic educational ideals and the elite premilitary education of youth during Nazi Germany in her analysis *Sparta's German Children: The Ideal of Ancient Sparta in the Royal Cadet Corps, 1818-1920, and in National-Socialist Elite Schools (Napolas), 1933-1945*. Roche argues that the elite premilitary education during National Socialism adopted the Sparta-*topos* of the Prussian cadet schools. Not only did the *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten* (*Napola*) pick up on the male-centric tradition of military discipline, athletic drill, and asceticism to serve the national purpose, but also racist ideas such as the general assumption of deterioration due to blood/race mingling.

Yet, at the same time, the attentiveness and perspicacity behind the increasingly historicized approach evoke a strong sense of empathy toward the protagonists and their social and historical contexts. While the novels of Chapter 3 revealed a sober and disengaged narrative style, the style of the texts discussed here is still nonjudgmental, yet the involvement of the abandoned child reflects a renewed social and political engagement. The socio-political commitment of literature has been the focus of German literary debates since the *Wende*. Voices of this debate in its version of the 2010s include writer and cultural journalist Florian Keßler. In a 2014 commentary in the German weekly *Die Zeit,* Keßler claims that currently young German writers are lacking an essential element of writing, namely "die Literatur mit abweichenden Stimmen und Erfahrungsgründen anreichern" (to enrich literature with contradictory voices and different backgrounds of experience [translation mine]) (*Lassen Sie mich durch, ich bin Arztsohn*). Keßler postulates that German literature in the beginning of the 21st century has abandoned its socio-political obligation. Maxim Biller also criticizes contemporary German-speaking literature for its supposed lack of depth in experience, its deficiency in sensual effects, and for its unengaged conformity (Stuart Taberner *The Novel in German since 1990* 2-3). His most recent critique was directed at the process of assimilating immigrant writers to the German literary world, who, in Biller's view, lose their original voice due to the domesticating forces of the German literary market (*Letzte Ausfahrt Uckermark*).[2] Neither of the texts under consideration reflects unengaged conformity.

[2] Keßler's and Biller's articles are a reminder of the *Literaturdebatte* (literary debate) of the early 1990s, which was an attempt to reassess the relationship between German speaking literature and politics after the *Wende*. Initiated by critiques of Christa Wolff's 1990 novel *Was bleibt* (*What Remains*), critics from the conservative side of the political spectrum demanded "a less self-flagellating obsession with the Nazi-past" but rather more national confidence and originality reflected in German–speaking literature (Stuart Taberner, *The Novel in German,* 2). Critics from the left-liberal side also demanded a new impetus in literature. However, these critics rather sought

Quite contrary to the accusation of lack of depth, the texts' forte lies in their portrayal of social and historical complexities. Furthermore, Herrndorf's *Tschick* offers an array of emotional and sensual experiences, which Biller praises in films by Fatih Akin and which he misses in contemporary German literature (*Letzte Ausfahrt Uckermark*).[3]

Herrndorf's, Krechel's, and Leo's texts reflect a change in the German literary world which is further reflected in the topic focus of the 2015 Frankfurt book fair. Probably influenced by the growing severity of global conflicts, especially in the Middle East, and the resulting increase of migration in 2015, the convention of that year, as many journalists documented, revealed increased political commitment and a stronger representation of immigrant writers, analogous to contemporary literary trends:

> Und auch Schreiben scheint in diesen Tagen ohne Engagement kaum denkbar zu sein. Denn passend zu diesem Bücherherbst, in dem man sich gerade erst wieder auf der Frankfurter Buchmesse sehr politisch gab, beschäftigen sich auch die Münchner Literaturstipendiaten in diesem Jahr auffallend stark mit gesellschaftspolitischen und sozialen Themen. (Antje Weber, *Planet Hoffnung*)
>
> And also writing that does not reflect political engagement is hard to find. For, befitting this season of books during which one was expected to express political commitment, the Munich Literature Awardees focused remarkably on socio-political themes (translation mine).

Contrary to the noncommittal style often seen in novels around the 2000s, writers of the 2010s foster the commitment to dealing with socio-political circumstances. Although quite heterogeneous in content and style, all three novels discussed in this chapter show signs of being part of the trend towards social and political engagement. They address not

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role models in American literature, which was thought to be more sensual and entertaining in its story-telling (2). As the following years rendered the German literary world more market-driven, debaters addressed capitalism affecting German literature after the *Wende*, which then allegedly lacked *litérature engagée* (literature with a social and political orientation) .

[3] The film adaptation of Herrndorf's *Tschick* is planned to be released in 2016. After much competition, Fatih Akin took over directing the highly sought-after film adaptation under the production of Marco Mehlitz, after he had tried to buy the rights for the adaptation himself (*Streit um Herrndorf-Verfilmung: Mein Tschick, dein Tschick* Speigel Online).

only abandoned children (or their abandoned parents, as in Krechel's text), but, interlinked with them, they address abandoned periods of time, heretofore hidden continuities of history, little-represented places, and minorities in an engaging and empathetic narrative style. While personal trauma of abandonment occurs, the theme of abandonment is no longer only one individual's experience. Rather, abandonment is portrayed as a structural issue as it involves an abandoned aspect of history, a neglected time period, or the marginalization of a minority group. The abandoned child (or parent) serves, through his/her abandonment, as a symbol of one of these aspects rather than as an individual case of traumatization due to the disruption of history.

Wolfgang Herrndorf's *Tschick*

Wolfgang Herrndorf (1965-2013) studied art at the Akadamie der Bildenen Künste Nürnberg and published his art in several magazines before he became a writer. In 2010 Herrndorf was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. He committed suicide in 2013 after three years of living with the illness and continuing his work as a writer. Most of his novels were written during his period of illness. After his 2003 Berlin-based debut novel, *In Plüschgewittern,* told from the confused and cynical perspective of a thirty-year-old male, Wolfgang Herrndorf created in his 2010 youth novel, *Tschick,* a narrative from the perspective of an adolescent boy, a runaway from home, who grows up on the outskirts of Berlin about twenty years after the *Wende*. *Tschick* was followed by the award-winning novel *Sand* (2011) in which Herrndorf crafts a mystery story revolving around a North African desert theme in the 1970s. In 2014, Herrndorf's publisher released his unfinished novel *Bilder deiner großen Liebe: Ein unvollendeter Roman*,

which is a follow-up to *Tschick* representing the perspective of the female counterpart.

Through the narrator and protagonist, fourteen-year-old Maik Klingenberg, Herrndorf provides a perspective on the German fourth generation and current German youth culture through which themes of abandonment and history appear in a uniquely authentic light.

In a situation of feeling excluded by their peers at the beginning of the summer school break, the well-to-do, but socially awkward and shy, eighth-grader Maik Klingenberg and his classmate Andrej Tschichatschoff (with the nickname Tschick) begin an unsupervised road trip through Eastern Germany in a stolen car. Maik's father is a real-estate broker who earned a great fortune in his business shortly after the *Wende*, but is now on the verge of bankruptcy. Maik's mother is addicted to alcohol and repeatedly undergoes rehab. Tschick has just recently entered Maik's class at the *Gymnasium* after having gone through the hierarchy of each possible type of German secondary school. Tschick emigrated from Russia as a so-called *Russlanddeutscher*, he lives with his older brother in a public housing project, and, while he is described as very bright, often comes to school reeking of alcohol. He is discriminated against by his peers for his ethnic background and his appearance. At the beginning of the summer break, Tschick steals an old car and visits Maik. As Maik's mother departs to do another rehab and his father leaves for vacation with his female assistant, Maik is left home alone and suggests they use the stolen car to go on a road trip. Starting with crashing their classmate's party as the only ones in the class who are not invited, Tschick and Maik careen through rural Eastern Germany. During the trip they have various encounters with people. They get invited to eat lunch with a hospitable family, they meet Isa—a dump

dweller of the same age—they encounter a helpful speech therapist, and an abandoned mine worker with an unpredictable temper who talks incomprehensibly about his role during World War II and hands them a small bottle with a mysterious substance. The journey ends in a car accident after which the boys get caught. Maik resumes his regular life as *Gymnasium* student and gets sentenced to do community service, whereas Tschick becomes institutionalized. Their road trip disproves the image of the world as a dangerous and generally unfriendly place that had been taught to Maik by his teachers and parents.

While most journalistic responses to *Tschick* have been positive,[4] scholarly voices also address problematic aspects of Herrndorf's novel. Heidi Bösch describes in *Tschick und Maik—Stereotype in Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (2015) Herrndorf's novel as perpetuating existing negatively interpreted stereotypes of Russian immigrants, which is, according to Bösch, amplified in its recent theatrical performances. Boris Hoge-Benteler also addresses in *Metakonstruktion: Zur Möglichkeiten des Umgangs mit problematischen Russland-/ Russendarstellungen in der jüngsten deutschen Erzählliteratur am Beispiel von Wolfgang Herrndorf's Roman Tschick* the portrayal of Tschick's ethnic background but describes it as a literary construct—a product of the narrator's fantasies—to enhance the narrative composition of the novel.

Examining the novel under the premise of the abandoned child motif reveals more than the problematics surrounding the depiction of Russians. More than a motif for the purpose of expressing and dealing with trauma related to history, the abandoned child

[4] Ulrich Rüdenauer (Frankfurter Rundschau) describes the novel as charming, funny, and brilliant while Dieter Hildebrandt praises the novel's playfulness (Die Zeit), and Felicitas von Lovenberg calls it a "Hymne auf das Jungsein, Freundschaft, Liebe und das Leben" (an ode to youth, friendship, love, and life) (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung).

is the narrative prerequisite for a story about adolescent imagination and desire. The motif is imbedded in timeless and well-tried themes of friendship, love, and adventure and emphasizes the novel's complex social and historical texture. While dealing with themes of the past, *Tschick* primarily serves adolescent fantasies of love and adventure and does not fit the genre of texts predominantly contextualized within cultural memory. Thus the relationship between past and present deviates from the persistent connection between abandonment and World War II in the heretofore analyzed texts. Abandonment is not tied to effects of World War II and the novel shows no familial tie to that past. Moreover, the perspective of a child has in itself a decentralizing effect on the novel's representation of World War II and the Holocaust. While there is a significant reference to communism and World War II, Herrndorf's portrayal of it excludes the familial and generational construct altogether. Instead, communism and World War II are described as a strange and incomprehensible world from long ago, representing the yet unencumbered perspective of the German fourth generation.

Rather than tied to familial history of the larger part of the 20th century, abandonment is a present concern in *Tschick*, which reflects socio-political issues of the Berlin Republic. Yet the theme of abandonment interweaves multiple cultural frameworks that are currently relevant but reveal wide-ranging historical traces that are less centered on World War II but nonetheless fraught with ambiguity: immigration politics of the Berlin Republic, the German educational system, *Bildungstradition*, and contemporary parenting culture. All of these frameworks reflect issues unique to the contemporaneous situation, yet indirectly, they reveal the continuation of historical issues still relevant in the 21st century.

Also Herrndorf's narrative style draws the reader's attention to the distanced roots of 21st-century social issues. While the plot addresses contemporary German post-*Wende* disillusionment and intercultural issues, Herrndorf uses a narrative style which alludes to traditional genres and styles such as adventure novels about friendship modeled after Mark Twain and characteristics of the German romanticist *Bildungsroman*. With these traditional narrative templates, Herrndorf provides cultural and historical navigation for a generation coming of age in a world challenged by rapid global change, in which moral frameworks often do not endure generational changes. At the same time, juxtaposing contemporary social political issues with traditional narrative patterns exposes their incompatibility and casts an appeal to view these traditions and their relationship to 21st-century Germany critically.

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While both Maik and Tschick experience abandonment at the same time, and both of their situations reflect the effects of the fall of the Iron Curtain, their circumstances of abandonment differ. Maik's situation represents the prosperous part of post-*Wende* German society, in most cases West Germans, who invested in the former GDR and profited from the opening of the East German borders. Yet with time passing and the slow-down of the post-*Wende* excitement, not only has the father's business fallen apart but the family as well. Up to the point where the narrative starts, Maik has lived the economically comfortable but lonely life of a *rich kid* who is too well assimilated to be noticed by his peers or by his parents who are preoccupied by their personal problems.

Tschick represents the opposite end of the German social spectrum. As a Russian immigrant he represents the current post-*Wende* concerns revolving around immigration

politics and issues centered on the integration of Russians of German descent. Tschick came to Germany at the age of ten without his parents, signaling a history of familial trauma prior to his immigration. Contrary to Maik, he is constantly challenged by a lack of assimilation. Due to his social and ethnic background, Tschick is the class reject, sharing the lower rungs of the social ladder with Maik, which eventually connects them. Both boys are situated at the lowest end of the hierarchy of their school environment which is not only generated by the social order of their peers but by the teachers and school system as well.

That the boys' lives revolve around their school is depicted through the perspective of an adolescent. The youth perspective reveals both remnants of the ingenuousness of a child, and evidence of having almost reached the intellectual capacity of an adult. The adult world—parents, teachers, law enforcement—surrounding these two boys fails to acknowledge the high sensitivity and analytical capacity of adolescence, so that Maik's perspective serves as a lens through which he unmasks—not without a good degree of irony—the frailties and shortcomings of the adult world. Herrndorf underlines the sense of authenticity through the insider–outsider perspective through the use of colloquial language.

With the youth perspective, Herrndorf provides a bottom-up view on the *Gymnasium* as cultural interface, revealing key issues involving immigration and failure in the educational system. Tschick enters the school in eighth grade after having climbed the hierarchical ladder of German secondary schools starting with the school for children with special needs. The teacher who introduces Tschick points out the extraordinariness of this journey, underlining the strong and far-reaching hierarchizing impact of this

system based on the academic performance of ten-year-old children (45). The novel alludes to the generally segregating social effect of the German secondary school system which, according to the passage of Selbmann's *Der deutsche Bildungsroman* discussed above, is a relic of the Prussian education reform in the 19th century. Following the influence of German philhellenism on the idea of *Bildung*, the Prussian reform turned *Bildung* into a prestige-laden privilege for the bourgeois, further subordinating the working class with less access to *Bildung* as uneducated and inferior (13). Herrndorf addresses the current implications of *Bildung* as a power tool and a segregating influence through the current educational system, which affects the integration of today's immigrants detrimentally. Tschick's placement in the special education school underlines a thinly veiled prejudice toward immigrants assuming them to be less educated and developmentally behind the German standard. Tschick's journey up the ladder of German secondary schools in a relatively short period of time indicates his displacement in the system and a common failure on the part of German integration politics. Due to the stigmatization of the less prestigious secondary school, this method of placement is counterproductive in the process of integrating immigrant youth. Tschick exemplifies how the German school system does not match the needs of the current heterogeneous German demographics and comes across as utterly outdated.

However, even attending the prestigious *Gymnasium* does not make integration easier for Tschick. The first weeks at his new school reveals common issues of marginalization and discrimination toward immigrants. Neither students nor teachers show appropriate skills to introduce Tschick to his new school. The history teacher (Wagenbach) introduces Tschick to his class in a rather intimidating manner and fails to

pronounce Tschicks' last name, causing the students to laugh at his incompetence as well as the name (43). Wagenbach uses the perceived oddness of Tschick's name to introduce his origin as from far away: his name supposedly bespeaks his origin "aus den unendlichen russischen Weiten" (the boundless Russian expanses [all translations of *Tschick* by Tim Mohr]) that no Central European ruler has been able to conquer (he lists Karl XII, Napoleon, and Hitler as one congruent group, 43). Not only does his awkward comment smack of an ethnocentric German historical perspective rooted in the *Bildungstradition*, it also emphasizes Tschick's otherness, bestows it with a legacy of historical hostility, and disregards his German ethnic background (44). On one hand, instead of bringing Tschick closer to his new classmates, Wagenbach creates a distance between him and the class while simultaneously using the introduction to generally intimidate the class. The students pick up on the cultural and social distance created between them and their new classmate by calling him *der Mongole*, *Iwan*, or *der Förderschüler* (student attending a school for children with special needs) (48). These labels express directly how the German integration politics has categorized Tschick in the first place: an uneducated immigrant who is less intelligent than the German standard. His peers suspect him of being a member of the Russian mafia involved in human trafficking and arms trade, projecting their xenophobia onto him (44, 48). Tschick's introduction to the *Gymnasium* shows little effort toward integration and his German background seems predominantly ignored. The hostility toward him reveals prejudices against Russians which are still informed by terminology originating in Nazi Germany (*Iwan*). Tschick's school situation reveals that not only is he abandoned by his parents, he also represents the abandoned child of the immigration politics of the Berlin Republic.

Furthermore, Tschick discloses the widespread prejudices and xenophobia in 21st-century Germany, which has become a country of immigration.

Although Maik's socio-economic background greatly differs from Tschick's, he experiences similar ill-treatment and victimization at the school. When Maik uses some of his personal experience with his addicted mother in one of his essays, due to his age, he is not aware that that part of his daily life might be inappropriate for the class context. Rather than taking the essay as an insinuation of the boy's distress at home, his German teacher not only reprimands him but insults him (32). Maik's classmates henceforth call him *psycho*, which he perceives as one step above his usual state of being unnoticed (33). Maik describes teachers who read text messages out loud to the entire class after collecting their students' cell phones, purposefully embarrassing the owner and fomenting students against each other (240). Reprimands and hostility are described as dominating the teacher–student relationship, setting a precedent for what seems to be a rather harsh pecking order among socially insecure teenagers. Corresponding to the segregating effect of the school system, social hierarchies seem to infiltrate the students' life as a dominant stress factor. The educational system sets the precursor for social hierarchies and segregation based on an individual's supposed intellectual aptitude and ability to adjust which then permeates the students' common social practices. *Tschick* questions the enduring effect of *Bildung*'s ideals which were meant to serve the demographics and class system of the 19th century.

The criticism of the outdated idea of *Bildung* also infuses the boys' road trip. The road trip alludes mockingly to the key-event of the *Bildungsroman*: the encounter with the unknown during a journey. The concept of *Bildung* in the *Bildungsroman* of German

classicism entails an independent and individual, but linear, path of education and character formation that corresponds with cultural ideas from the Enlightenment and the classic ideal of a beautiful soul.[5] *Bildung*, according to the classicist idea, involved a goal of social harmony and personal well-roundedness that, as discussed earlier, was thought to be achieved by the ancient Greeks. Most formation novels of the early 19th century follow a tripartite structure which includes a temporary escape from the bourgeois world of the parents' generation through a physical journey in order to pursue an independent and individualized phase of living and experience. The latter is followed by a re-socialization of the matured and well-balanced persona.[6]

As in many examples of the *Bildungsroman*, the journey in *Tschick* involves encounters with various influential characters. Yet, although the two protagonists can be described as going through an enriching experience, Herrndorf rather follows the tradition of the parody of the *Bildungsroman*, in which writers undermined the streamlined idea of education. [7] *Tschick* undermines the idea of a linear development towards the ideal of a well-adjusted character who reenters bourgeois society. The boys' experience during their journey leads to insight that further questions the institutions of authority that regulate their lives. As both boys are underage and their journey involves a stolen car, their endeavor is illicit. Aside from exploring the unknown, the boys' journey is an escape from authority and control in their life. In the space outside of their normal regulated world of mostly socially unreliable institutions, the two protagonists regain

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[5] Schiller defines, in *Über Anmut und Würde,* the beautiful soul as the goal of an aesthetic education, which entails the harmonious completion of a human ideal through reconciling obligation and desire and rationality and sensuality, which is reflected in one's graceful appearance.
[6] See Chapter 5 "Wilhelm Meister" –Muster der Gattung?' in Rolf Selbmann's *Der Bildungsroman*.
[7] Most *Bildungsromane* from the late 18th and early 19th century show deviations from the classicist pattern. Starting with Karl Philipp Moritz' *Anton Reiser* (1786) into late Romanticism (E.T.A Hoffmann's *Lebens-Ansichten des Kater Murr*), formation novels often parody this pattern or follow an opposite pattern.

trust in personal relationships, not only the one they develop between each other:

> Seit ich klein war, hatte mein Vater mir beigebracht, dass die Welt schlecht ist. Die Welt ist schlecht und der Mensch ist auch schlecht. Trau keinem und geh nicht mit Fremden und so weiter. Das hatten mir meine Eltern erzählt, das hatten mir meine Lehrer erzählt, und das Fernsehen erzählte es auch. ... Und vielleicht stimmte das ja auch, und der Mensch war zu 99 Prozent schlecht. Aber das seltsame war, dass Tschick und ich auf unserer Reise fast ausschließlich dem einen Prozent begegneten, das nicht schlecht war. (209)
>
> (Ever since I was a little boy my father had told me that the world was a bad place. The world is bad and people are bad. Don't trust anyone, don't talk to strangers, all of that. My parents drilled that into me, even TV drilled that into me. When you watched the local news – people were bad. And maybe it was true, maybe ninety-nine percent of people were bad. But the strange thing was that on this trip, Tschick and I had run into almost only people from the one percent who weren't bad).

Maik questions even more the authority of the influential people in his life and the values of the culture in which he has been growing up. Reentering their regulated lives does not happen upon discernment on their part but due to being caught after their car accident. For the most part, the reaction of people of authority around them confirm their inadequacies: The teacher ridicules the experience, and Maik's father reacts with heavy corporal punishment. Moreover, the youth welfare service locks Tschick in isolation, after he had just experienced his first step of integration through his friendship with Maik (228-230, 231, 240). Thus, for the most part, Maik continues to distrust the institutions around him due to their continuing failure. Contrary to the classical idea of the plot of the *Bildungsroman*, the established adult world is portrayed as being at least equally in need of evolution as the youth, and the end of their road trip confirms that reentering the world of adult supervision means abandonment of their emotional and intellectual needs.

Corresponding to the references to German *Bildungstradition* involving the educational system and the *Bildungsroman*, other social aspects addressed in *Tschick*

have similar or even more distant roots. Tschick condenses these aspects as part of his personal history as he embodies a complex history of migration and of life as a minority. He lists Volga Germans and Banat Swabians who settled along the Volga and the Danube in southwestern Europe at the end of the 18th century as part of his ethnic background (98). It seems likely that Tschick's family history can be contextualized as part of Catherine the Great's colonization politics in the second half of the 18th century, when the empress facilitated German settlement in regions of the Russian empire that were largely unpopulated or mostly frequented by nomads. These measures were part of Catherine's German-Russian imperialistic politics to increase manpower for potential war and general development, which have had lasting effects. German colonies started to prosper in the 19th century, though throughout the larger part of the 20th century, Russians of German descent were heavily persecuted as alleged collaborators with the German empire and later Nazi Germany.[8] As part of Mikhail Gorbachev's Glasnost, Russians of German descent were allowed to emigrate. Since then, 2.5 million repatriates have immigrated to Germany. Representing an entire German minority, Tschick, aside from his individual situation of childhood abandonment, stands for the political abandonment of this German minority in Eastern Europe throughout the upheavals of the 20th century. The implications of these distant events on the young lives of the protagonists—such as

[8]See György Dalos's *Geschichte der Russlanddeutschen: Von Katharina der Großen bis zur Gegenwart*, particularly Chapter I: *Die Heilige Welt der Kolonisten*. After periods of hardship due to crop failure and famine among the colonists, by the mid-19th century large parts along the northern coast of the Black Sea showed German speaking colonies as well as along the Volga and Volhynia (today's northwestern Ukraine) that were under local German-speaking self-administration. Throughout the 19th century the German colonies continued to prosper until the outbreak of the First World War. Starting with the war, anti-German sentiments rose and increased during communism and ended in persecution of Russians of German descent during World War II due to general allegations of collaboration with Nazi Germany. The colonies were dissolved and their residents were transported to Siberia and detained in labor camps. While prisoners were released in the early 1950s, the allegations of collaboration with Nazi Germany were not dropped until the 1960s.

integration and assimilation problems—decentralize the heretofore common focus on World War II and its implications.

As Tschick's ethnic background is not only made up of Volga Germans and Banat Swabians but Jews and Roma as well, it bespeaks of a history of exclusion and discrimination. But its diversity also suggests the relegation, in certain circumstances, of the status of ethnic and national identity in an increasingly globalized world. When Tschick lists *jüdische Zigeuner* as ancestors, Maik refuses to accept this combination: "jüdische Zigeuner, das ist wie englische Franzosen! Das gibt's nicht" (Jewish gypsies, that's like English French men! That does not exist) (98). In his juvenile comment, Maik belies a categorical thinking about ethnicity and nationality that has not caught up with the reality of globalization and corresponds to his classmates' less disguised racist labeling of Tschick.

Hoge-Benteler places the "Zigeunerjude" (gypsy Jew) within the narrator's narrative construct, in which Tschick assumes the place of a figure situated between fantasy and reality—a mysterious unknown—as is typical for romanticist novels (40). Another reference to the uncanny other of the romanticist novel is the abandoned mineworker in the otherwise uninhabited East German era mining town. As the two boys accidently end up in the rundown and outlandish looking town, the left-over inhabitant shoots at them. After the boys communicate that they are no threat to the man, he invites them into his shack and starts rambling about World War II. He claims to have been a communist resistance fighter and a Wehrmacht soldier at the same time. His claim becomes questionable as he, in a drunken stupor, utters racist and fascist remarks. The Nazi past and communism become undistinguishable in this experience of utter

strangeness.

Growing scared, the boys bid farewell to the man and receive a bottle of a strange substance which alludes to the elixir in romanticist literature: a magical potion often with evil effect. In E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (*The Devil's Elixirs*) the young protagonist Medardus cannot resist consuming the devil's elixirs and thus inherits his family's curse of which he is unaware. The mineworker, representing the evil past revolving around World War II, might thus be read as the boys' unknown curse. Although they discard of the little bottle, this representation of Germany's evil past makes for an ominous climax in the plot. The extraordinary experience eventually leads to two consecutive car accidents and thus the end of the two boys' unsupervised and unrestrained journey. If not the boys themselves, their journey is "cursed." Through the eyes of the adolescent fourth generation, the Holocaust and communism have lost their continuous presence, but are rather accidently stumbled upon. However, in correspondence to the racist name calling at the *Gymnasium* in terms that originated during World War II, and Maik's resistance to accepting "Zigeunerjuden," the story's turning point at the old mine indicates that the youth in *Tschick* are yet not liberated from the burden of the past. *Tschick* illustrates how, at an age of limited understanding for and awareness of history, the life of Germany's fourth generation is still infused with remnants of the past and that even this generation is inheriting collective responsibility.

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Juxtaposing the traces of the past, *Tschick* addresses contemporary issues revolving around childrearing in the 21st century, which are not particularly tied to the German context but reflect upon Germany in the 21st century as part of the globalized

Western cultural framework. Abandonment becomes an ambivalent concept at this point, as the two boys, who both experience adult neglect, go through a liberating and socially and developmentally enriching experience during the time without adult supervision. The trip stands for the development of cross-cultural understanding, independence, and self-esteem. Herrndorf's coming-of-age novel with a positive conception of a runaway situation originated during a time when parenting culture yearns increasingly for more childhood freedom and thus raises questions about the over-controlling nature of the adult world. The critique of the over-controlled childhood started with the contemporary parent-generation's retrospection on what has been perceived as their own more independent childhood. In the first couple of decades of the 21st century, an anonymous letter with the title *Kaum zu glauben, dass wir so lange überleben konnten* (Unbelievable That We Survived) about a nostalgic retrospective on the childhood of generations born during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s was spread through German speaking social media. The author praises the children's exposure to risks as a positive part of a child's development, which children born after that period supposedly lack.[9] In the following years, the debate about the parenting style of the 21st century has become more pronounced, more official, and also more professional throughout the Western world. As part of this debate, in March 2014 the German independent television channel aired a documentary called *Generation Weichei* (*Generation Wimp*) which also discussed problematic adult control over children's and adolescents' lives. The documentary particularly addressed the issue revolving around electronic tracking devices and young adults' acceptance of and reliance on parental (adult) intervention and control in their lives.

[9] The German newspaper *Die Welt* printed a copy of the letter, which was spread like a chain letter in social media: http://www.welt.de/welt_print/article1468743/Kaum-zu-glauben-dass-wir-so-lange-ueberleben-konnten.html

The North American media coverage of the issue of overprotected parenting in the 21st century reflects upon the Western globalized dimension of this issue: In March 2014, the renowned monthly magazine *The Atlantic* published an extensive article by Hannah Rosin titled *The Overprotected Kid*. Rosin discusses contemporary parents' need for safety and supervision of their children against the background of their own "free-range" childhood experiences.[10] Rosin proposes for a return to the supposedly greater field of experience due to less adult control and safety measures in order to foster physical and mental independence and confidence in the youth. In this context of child rearing debates, *Tschick* serves as a statement against a general state of fear and its wide range of implications that encompass the realm of childhood at the beginning of the new millennium.

Herrndorf's youth protagonists stand out with their rebellious behavior that, according to this debate, has become rare in their age cohort. As one of their first measures, the boys leave behind their cell phones so as to avoid being tracked and reached. They thus easily disable the most controlling device of their age (102). This gesture is obviously a necessity in order to not get caught but it is also symbolic, as the cell phone is the key element of the controlling infrastructure and at the same time a highly fetishized commodity among the youth. Abandoning the cell phone and its paramount representation of social ties mediated through it resembles cutting an umbilical cord and makes a strong cultural statement. Without the cell phone difficult situations require going without the dense German infrastructure such as online

[10] *Helicopter parents*, *free-range parenting*, and *bubble boy nation* have become common key words in the debate of contemporary child rearing issues.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/search.php/?q=free+range+parenting&s_it=header_form_v1;
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/search.php/?q=helicopter+parents

information and instead require increased creativity. The lack of high-tech assistance lends the boys' journey an aura of going back in time and evokes nostalgic sentiments with a further sense of liberation. While the situation of emotional and physical abandonment contributes to the boys' departure on their unsupervised journey, despite the risk of the trip, being without parental supervision and guidance also means an opportunity to be liberated from the ever tightening structural world of institutions and infrastructure and thus places them in a space to grow. Thus the concept of abandonment in *Tschick* is less centered on the presence of parents as it is on the adults' way of serving the child's needs that necessitates acquiring independence and responsibility as tools to deal with his contemporary circumstances of globalization and the effects of history.

Looking at the boys' neglected needs reveals an interesting gender pattern. Of the adults they encounter, the majority who show the most understanding toward the boys' needs are female. The education system and the administrative system Maik deals with after the car accident, the ending of the boys' adventure, is exclusively represented by authoritative males. The liberating experience of the journey is predominantly associated with females. Aside from neglect, the boys' journey is also strongly motivated by unanswered love for a female and females continue to play a powerful and overall positive role. The mother of five who generously invites them for lunch impresses the boys as an incredibly well-read teacher of her children. The dump-dweller girl, whom the two boys run into during their endeavor is described as much better adjusted to a lack of supervision, is generally outspoken, and impressively self-sufficient and independent. Moreover, the female adults portrayed in the texts—Maik's mother and the speech therapist who picks them up from the side of the road—are the only adults who show

understanding and sympathy for the boys' situation and motivation. In the boys' adventure, females of all ages play a contrasting role to the failing male-dominated authoritative structures in the boys' life, suggesting a more successful alternative to meet the youth's needs in the 21st century that lies beyond any traditional male-driven method of education and childrearing.

The motif of the abandoned child in *Tschick* opens up a much larger cultural spectrum of identification than any other text discussed so far has. Thus the motif in *Tschick* renders a much more heterogeneous and ambivalent concept of abandonment. It is no longer predominantly portrayed within the larger context of World War II but it depicts current problems involving Germany's immigration politics, post-*Wende* disillusionment, and 21st-century parenting culture. Furthermore, while World War II is decentralized compared to its role in previously discussed texts, childhood abandonment in Herrndorf's text draws attention to other aspects of German history and underlines their continuities. Herrndorf carves out contemporary social problems concerning youth against the backdrop of a historical legacy that, in contrast to most of the texts discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, goes beyond the 20th century. While the abandoned child motif in *Tschick* reflects the complex diversity of German society in the beginning of the 21st century, it also echoes a wide variety of approaches to German history.

Ursula Krechel's *Landgericht*

Ursula Krechel (b. 1947) studied German literature, theater, and art history during the time of Germany's 1968 student movement. She received her doctorate degree in German literature in 1972 and worked as a literary scholar, journalist, and as a dramatic

advisor at several theatres parallel to pursuing her career as a poet and writer. Krechel was actively engaged in the feminist movement in the late 1960s and 70s and women's rights and gender issues influence her work to this day. She reflects upon the German women's movement and her own experience in it in her 1976 essay *Selbsterfahrung und Fremdbestimmung* (Self-Awareness and Heteronomy). Krechel achieved her literary breakthrough with her drama *Erika* (1973), a feminist text, which deals with a woman's attempt to alter her other-directed life in a world dominated by men. Krechel's early work is dominated by poetry. Her 1977 lyric debut *Nach Mainz!* (To Mainz!) is a collection of poems dealing with autobiographical aspects such as childhood in postwar West Germany, detachment from the parental home, and reflections on the student movement. In 1981 Krechel published her first novel, *Zweite Natur* (Second Nature), which portrays the social situation of a group of young people living together in Frankfurt a. Main. *Zweite Natur* might be read as a sober taking stock of the cultural and political effects of the late 1960s and 70s. The novel creates an atmosphere of disillusionment expressed in the group's depressing and, at the same time, self-righteous, complacent approach to their own perceived social and psychological problems. In her 2008 novel, *Shanghai, fern von wo* (Shanghai, far wherefrom), Krechel addresses for the first time the topic involving exiles who left their home country due to Nazi persecution. Krechel started her research on the circumstances of exiles in Shanghai in the early 1980s.[11] Shanghai was one of the last resorts for those fleeing Nazi persecution, as it, due to the city's own political situation, required no visa. Krechel describes in several episodes multiple stories of individuals traveling to and living in Shanghai. Her latest novel, *Landgericht* (2012), which received the German Book Prize in 2012, is derived from that very research on

[11] See Ulrich Rüdenauer's article *Die Archivarin des Verdrängten* in the German weekly *Die Zeit*.

exiles in Shanghai. *Landgericht* is based on the story of Robert Bernd Michaelis, one of the Shanghai exiles, but whose circumstances Krechel transfers to an exile situation involving Cuba.[12]

The novel starts with the protagonist Richard Kornitzer's return from his exile in Cuba to postwar Germany in 1948. Yet, the novel's narrated time starts with Richard's pre-World War II life with his wife, Claire. The German-Jewish/non-Jewish couple are young parents when the persecution of Jews begins under the Hitler regime. Both lose their successful careers as judge and manager of a film advertisement company as part of the early anti-Jewish discrimination laws. For their protection, the parents send their two children, Georg and Selma—seven and four years old—on one of the *kindertransports* to Great Britain. While the parents seek exile themselves, only Richard, who is Jewish, manages to leave Germany for exile in Cuba. Claire remains in Germany and undergoes recurring abuse by the Gestapo during the Third Reich. Richard spends ten years in exile in Cuba where he finds work as a clerk in a law office. From afar, he follows with fellow exiled compatriots the events in Central Europe. Although in great worry over his family, Richard starts a romantic relationship with a Cuban school teacher. They have a daughter together (Amanda) who grows up with her aunt. After Richard's return to Germany after the war, Claire and Richard meet in Konstanz at the Bodensee, where Claire has found work as a secretary. During the chaos of the immediate postwar years, Claire is the bread-winner and the more stable part of their marriage while Richard tries to find work and to

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[12] Martin Bernd Michaelis, Michaelis's grandson, writes in his article *Diese Geschichte vererbt sich an die Kinder: Was stimmt, was stimmt nicht? Und wer ist die reale Familie hinter dem Erfolgsroman „Landgericht", mit dem Ursula Krechel dem Richter Robert Bernd Michaelis ein Denkmal setzte?* in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung about the parallels between Krechel's protagonist Richard Kornitzer and Michaelis's grandfather: Like Kornitzer, Robert Bernd Michaelis worked as a judge in Mainz after his return to Germany and fought for his restitution.

readjust. After a short while of working with the French interim government to provide legal support to displaced persons, Richard receives a job offer as a judge in Mainz. While Kornitzer notices the infiltration of former Nazis and bystanders in the public sector of the young *Bundesrepublik*, he focuses on his work as judge and on regrouping his scattered family. Yet it becomes increasingly obvious that restoring prewar life is an impossible endeavor. The first realization is the irretrievably lost original parent-child relationship. After their relocation, Selma and Georg stay in touch with their biological parents, yet their relationship is overshadowed by the past and more resembles that of acquaintances. With the fight for appropriate restitution, Richard and Claire grow increasingly bitter while their health drastically declines. Claire never works again after the move to Mainz and dies before Richard due to kidney failure. Richard follows her in death shortly after without the desired success in his fight for restitution.

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Journalistic critics predominantly praise Krechel's novel about issues revolving around World War II related exile for its meticulous effort to recover the repressed. Ulrich Rüdenauer writes in his article *Die Archivarin des Verdrängten* (The Archivist of the Repressed): "Ursula Krechels Romane der letzten Jahre sind in diesem Sinne auch als ästhetisch reizvolle Auseinandersetzungen mit dem Unausgesprochenen zu lesen" (Ursula Krechel's novels of the last few years may thus be read as aesthetically appealing ways to grapple with the unspoken [translation mine]) (*Die Zeit* 2012). While Rüdenauer underlines Krechel's effort to discover an untold part of West German postwar history, Andreas Platthaus of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* describes Krechel's novel as restoring "jene Gerechtigkeit, die seinem Protagonisten verwehrt blieb. Die Autorin

verschreibt sich hier nicht nur einem individuellen, sondern einem Generationenschicksal" (that justice, that the protagonist is denied. The author commits to not only the experience of an individual, but to the experience of an entire generation [translation mine]) (FAZ 2012). Both Rüdenauer and Platthaus see the novel's strength in its wide-ranging excavating gesture toward untold stories. Other journalists, such as Sebastian Hammehle of *Der Spiegel,* see in the presence of archival research the text's weakness, as in Hammehle's eyes

> [Krechels] Roman leidet unter seiner Machart. Er will an einen Menschen erinnern, an das Unrecht, das ihm geschehen ist...Doch Krechel bleibt zu nah an ihrem Stoff .... *Landgericht* [ist] weniger ein Roman, es ist ein romanartiger Bericht: Dem Buch fehlen mitunter Stimmungen, Zwischentöne. (*Deutsche-Buchpreisträgerin Ursula Krechel: Die Gerechtwerderin* Spiegel Online 2012)
>
> ([Krechel's] novel suffers from its own workmanship. It commemorates a person, an injustice, that happened to him…Yet Krechel remains too close to the subject matter ….. *Landgericht* is not so much a novel as it is a novel-like report: The book is missing athmosphere, emotional nuances [translation mine]).

While the critiques above vary in their judgment of Krechel's novel, all three have in common the emphasis on Krechel's archival approach to a topic, which has received little literary attention.

Krechel's archival effort in *Landgericht* also plays an important role in relationship to the abandoned child motif in the novel. In order to make this connection clear, I will start by elaborating Krechel's generational position, as it is paramount in understanding the motif in her text. Since Krechel used to be a politically active member of the so-called 68er generation, the reading of *Landgericht* needs to consider the perspective of her age cohort, whose members generally view themselves as abandoned by their parents and who addressed this feeling by aggressively reproaching their parents' culpability. As Krechel points out about that time during which she started her career as a

writer: “Es gab sicherlich ein großes Bedürfnis, bei Eltern, bei Professoren und anderen Autoritäten zu schauen, was sie im Dritten Reich gemacht haben. Das Misstrauen war immer da” (Certainly there was a great need to research the role parents, professors, and other authorities have played during the Third Reich. That kind of suspicion was always there [translation mine]) (qtd. in Rüdenauer). Krechel’s early writing was influenced by the conflict with the parent generation as well as feminist issues of that time. *Landgericht* is written from a second-generation perspective which reveals the desire to revisit almost forty-five years later the formerly held perspective of the late 1960s and 70s.

As a result of revisiting the former position of what I have identified as the second-generation abandoned child, Krechel’s style in *Landgericht* changes, and certain concepts, which were central to the political and historical perspective of the second generation, undergo a reverse: *Landgericht* is less about abandoned children as it is about abandoned parents. Furthermore, the novel focuses on the victims of Nazism rather than the perpetrator position at which the second generation’s reproach was directed. Krechel’s essays over the last two decades reveal more about the shift in her stylistic approach to social issues. In her 1995 essay *Ingeborg Bachmann* Krechel claims,

> The dichotomy exploiter-exploited, like that of perpetrator and victim, derived from the general political discourse of the sixties and used by the new women’s movement for describing differences between the sexes, was replaced in the eighties by careful analysis of mutual complicity, which did not seek individual measure or guilt, but rather the interweaving of social dependencies (qtd. in Melin, 144).

Although rather focused on gender issues, Krechel describes the shift in perspective that happened between the late 1960s and the writing of *Landgericht*: the revisiting of the viewpoint of the second generation abandoned child. The shift reflected in *Landgericht* from *abandoned child* to *abandoned parent* as well as from reproaching the perpetrators

to examining the victims corresponds to the more nuanced perspective Krechel describes in her essay. Krechel's novel explores tight and extensive webs of interwoven social dependencies not only regarding gender and sex, but also victim and perpetrator roles as well as generations.

This complex web of the 20th century renders two figures whose lives are embedded in a network of events and social circumstances. Their lives entail dealing with the aftermath of being victims of Nazism, exile, and the failure of being able to reunite the dispersed family as well as to readjust to one's own postwar country. The novel reflects these issues in the complex context of what can be—for the most part—described as quotidian life. The protagonists are not political activists but ordinary people who pursue the goal to finally live a peaceful family life. Without the focus on laudable deeds, they are people, who—on the basis of their daily life and their attempts to adjust and recover from the impact of the war—reveal flaws and their own limitations. Yet their life together, in which they had just entered parenthood and started a successful career, can never be restored. Thus the two protagonists represent abandoned parent figures whose life is historicized within the framework of the larger part of that century.

Krechel's essayistic, detailed, perspicacious, and extensive narrative style lends itself to the exploration of the social webs and to reviewing the last century thoroughly not under the aspects of controversial dichotomies but under the aspects of mentioned social dependencies. Krechel's narrator in *Landgericht* holds an omniscient position with the network of historical events and social circumstances presented and thus reveals a shift away from the rather static bipolar first-person narrative position typical in *Väterliteratur*. The auctorial narrator does not judge but reflects empathy and flexibility

toward the protagonists' viewpoints and experiences. At times, the narrator remains distanced so that the protagonists speak for themselves, while at other times she reveals an ethical position not without a sense of irony. Rather than representing a strong position, the narrator draws the reader into the life of the protagonists and thus invites the reader to get mentally engaged with the questions the text raises. Krechel creates a highly complex image of the 20th century with a focus on the German postwar world that, while it transforms clearly outlined categories such as victim and perpetrator, exploited and exploiter, is emphatically concerned with the moral implication of the past, especially with those aspects that have been little addressed.

Krechel's faith in facts underlines the desire to distance oneself from the personal and subjective standpoint in *Väterliteratur*. The archival facts in Krechel's novel facilitate drawing attention to something that had been forgotten. As Krechel states (as quoted above), "[w]hen dealing with a traumatic effort of forgetting I find it inappropriate to invent too much. Therefore: I rather restrain my fantasy" (quoted in *Die Archivarin des Verdrängten* Die Zeit). The archival base for her work helps Krechel to underline the voice of the other rather than her own. It might be read as an empathetic gesture toward the abandoned ones, which in Krechel's text is an entire chapter of history: Germany's exiles and their return.

*

When Claire and Richard Kornitzer inquire about leaving Nazi Germany, most of the foreign consulates have already placed restrictions on their visas making it impossible for the family to leave. A representative of the protestant church organizing exile for their persecuted members tells Claire "Nur Kinder! Wir bringen Kinder nach England!" (Only

children! We take children to England! [all translations of *Landgericht* mine, unless stated otherwise]). As Claire's return question "[u]nd die Eltern?" (what about the parents?) signals, the parents are the ones who are abandoned in this situation (263). Richard visits the children in England where they are in the care of a reverend and his sister. Despite the pain of parting with them, he knows their whereabouts: "Er sieht den schönen Rosengarten, die Malven, die Pfefferminzbüschel im Schatten der Ulmen und ist beruhigt. Ja, die Kinder haben es gut getroffen" (He sees the beautiful rose garden, the mallows, the pepermint brushes in the shade of the elm trees and is relieved. Yes, the children are taken care of) (271). Although the children do not stay at the reverend's house and certainly go through a traumatizing period until they adjust to their life with their final foster family, this statement signals the focus on the parents' traumatization caused by the separation of the family, which will be the focus of this analysis.

Both parents lose touch with the children during the war and while Claire finds out the whereabouts of her husband and is able to arrange his return to Germany in the chaos of the postwar years, she is, at first, unable to find out anything about her children in England. Not until several months later, a Jewish aid organization contacts Claire in the process to find out whether Georg's and Selma's parents have survived the war, as the current foster parents would like to adopt the two children. Thus the Kornitzers locate their children as a result of the attempt by the foster parents to take over legal parenthood—the final loss of parenthood. Consequently, the children, now teenagers, have adjusted to their current foster situation so that, after more than ten years of separation, it becomes utterly difficult to reconnect with their parents. At the reunion between Claire and her children in England Selma fends off the reconnection to her

mother (English and italics are part of the German original):

> *It was an immense shock to be confronted with a strange woman and told that she was my mother, I didn't recognize her at all. Georg and I went to the station to meet her off the train. What on earth had this big fat woman to do with me?! She couldn't speak a word of English, I couldn't speak German and I didn't want to talk with her. She wanted to pull me to her and hug me but I couldn't bear her touching me.* Und das war etwas, was ihre Mutter nie erfahren sollte, aber auf Anhieb spürte (138).
>
> (And this was something her mother must never find out, yet felt it anyway).

Not only is Selma not able to connect to her mother due to not remembering her, but she rejects her. The disconnection between mother and child is underlined by the narrative style Krechel uses here. The paragraph distinguishes itself noticeably from the rest of the novel: it is the only long section in English and the only long first-person internal monologue. While Selma indeed lost her German, this insertion of English also suggests, symbolically speaking, that mother and daughter don't speak the same language in the sense that they are not on the same page. The first-person perspective bespeaks Selma's subjective and strong emotional viewpoint, which underlines the breach between daughter and mother.

Furthermore, providing insight into this strong emotional viewpoint of the child in a narrative that otherwise strikes through its nuanced approach to characters and situation might be read as a reference to the emotional reproach of the German second generation toward their parents during the time of the student movement. Contrasting the internal monologue of Selma with the rest of the novel underlines the novel's shift away from the former perspective of the second generation. Krechel's focus now is the perspective of the parents. However, they are parents as victims, not parents as perpetrators. Furthermore, this direct insight to Selma's emotional situation as reference to the 68er

generation emphasizes the communicative breakdown between parent and child generations portrayed in *Landgericht*. Thus, instead of mending the loss, the reunion turns out to be a second experience of loss for the mother.

As Richard and Claire force their still underage daughter to live with them, instead of enriching their lives the reunion increases both sides' sense of abandonment and loss. Upon her parents' legal claim on her to come to Germany, Selma experiences what she perceives as betrayal by her foster parents who had told her she could keep living with them despite her parents reentering her life (141). The separation from her brother, the only consistent and closest relationship in her life, traumatizes her further (142). The transfer to Germany reveals her legal status as *Staatenlose* (stateless person): as her traveling document raises some commotion at each border she crosses, she gets stuck between the countries revealing her far-reaching experience of abandonment. When the foster mother, Mrs. Hales, returns to England after accompanying Selma to Mainz, Selma feels as if she experiences a second *kindertransport*:

> Es war wie ein zweiter Kindertransport. Nur, daß sie jetzt fast erwachsen war, zum zweiten Mal hatte sie die vertraute Umgebung verlassen müssen, zum zweiten Mal hatte sie es mit einer fremden Sprache zu tun, und eine unendliche Kette von Anpassungsleistungen wurde von ihr erwartet. (145)
>
> (It felt like a second *kindertransport*. With the only difference that she was almost grown up. She was taken out of her familiar environment once more, and once again, she had to deal with a language she didn't speak, as well as an endless number of other adjustments).

After having gone through several fundamental changes in her early childhood while continuously trying to make sense of the absence of her parents, and after finally feeling comfortable with her latest foster family, the reunion with her parents is a tipping point in Selma's life: too much time has passed since she had left her parental home in Berlin in

order to be a child of her parents again.

Selma is old enough to rebel against this second "kindertransport," so that reuniting with at least one child fails. The children's reaction shows that Claire and Richard hold on to the idea of reversing time. Both Claire and Richard are surprised by what they perceive as their daughter's uncomfortably big body size, reflecting their denial of their child having grown up (134, 144-45). The attempt to build trust ends in a complete failure so that Claire and Richard let Selma go back to England: "Es war nicht einfach, die Tochter ein zweites Mal zu verlieren" (It wasn't easy to lose one's daughter a second time) (165). The hopes of reuniting the family, which helped the parents carry through the separation the first time, shatters and leaves Richard and Claire purposeless as parents. Yet they have to pay child support, a legal requirement that seems paradoxical and underlines their roles as abandoned parents (165).

Yet even before the children are evacuated and the parents stay behind, Claire and Richard experience being left behind when the *Rassengesetze* force them to abandon their careers. Similarly to Julia Franck's depiction of Helene's and Martha's progressive lifestyle during the Weimar years in *Die Mittagsfrau*, Claire and Richard's life in the 1920s and early 30s appears idealized. Richard's position as a judge specializing in patent law and Claire's high-ranking management position in the film industry make their professional roles politically symbolic for the Weimar Republic. As representative of executive authority, Richard is a representative of Weimar democracy itself and his specialty—patent law—implies the effect of the industrial revolution on democratic law. Furthermore, his successful career path as judge during the Weimar Republic symbolizes increased professional freedom for German Jews during these years. Claire, being in a

higher management position, running a film distribution company, and periodically being the main breadwinner, signifies, quite idealistically, the new status of women during the period of the Weimar Republic. The film industry at that time functioned as an important agent that helped move the representation of women, previously restricted to the private sphere, into the public realm. Particularly film advertisement, Claire's field of expertise, underlined women's buying power in the industrialized republic and made women important for the public realm.[13] The couple therefore represents a loss of a certain type of progressive life associated with the democratic interwar years and therefore stands for the early 20th century abandonment of democracy in Germany. Moreover, symbolizing the first attempt at German democracy, Richard and Claire signify a kind of parental figure of democracy and progressive life in the early postwar *Bundesrepublik*. Yet instead of being valued for their experience and the potential they represent in the young democracy of the *Bundesrepublik* in the late 1940s and 50s, Claire and Richard experience discrimination in their attempt to get reintegrated in their own country. Thus, Richard and Claire are not only abandoned parents due to the loss of their children, but also symbolically discarded as representing a German democratic society that existed prior to the *Bundesrepublik*.

The parents' situation of abandonment after having lost their professions and their children increases due to losing each other. After their separation their experience of victimization and abandonment differs from each other. While Richard manages with

[13] See Katharina von Ankum's introduction to *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in the Weimar Culture*. Von Ankum provides comprehensinve insight to the concept of the New Woman: "white-collar employment made working women more visible than ever before – moving them out of the relative privacy of the agricultural sector into the public clerical sector and thus from countryside into the city" (4). Yet aside from the increase in agency in the public realm, von Ankum also describes the downside to life of the modern woman (such as exploitation at work, still having to fulfil gender roles, and the harsh and competitive live in the public sphere), which contributed to women turning their back on the public sphere and urban life and going back to women's antimodern traditional gender roles and away from the city (2-4).

great effort to obtain a visa to travel to Cuba, his funds do not suffice for a bribe to obtain a second visa for Claire. Yet he does not hesitate to buy one for himself knowing that Claire must stay behind. Claire stays in Berlin where she becomes repeatedly victimized by the Gestapo. While she is the only member of the Kornitzer family who is placed in direct contact with the Gestapo, her experience during the war is merely indirectly and peripherally mentioned as opposed to the nearly hundred pages covering Richard's years of exile in Cuba. Krechel creates a complex situation in which it is impossible to say that Richard purposefully abandoned Claire as he had no viable choice. Yet Claire is more abandoned than Richard as she is in the worse situation being left behind with the Nazis.

Claire's situation in Nazi Germany is made worse by her refusal to divorce her Jewish husband. She receives repeated citations by the Gestapo and undergoes torture:

> Sie war mehrmals zur Gestapo vorgeladen worden und hatte unterschreiben müssen, nichts über diese Vorladungen, die Erschütterungen ihres bürgerlichen Lebens waren, weiterzugeben. Also war sie nicht zur Gestapo vorgeladen worden, also war sie nicht mißhandelt worden, zum Schweigen verdonnert ... das hatten sie einige Männer in einem Büro gelehrt, in dem sie lange warten mußte, bis es Nacht geworden war, bis das Haus nicht mehr von Schreien und Brüllen und Türenschlagen vibrierte (42).
>
> (She was summoned to appear at the Gestapo office multiple times and was forced to sign an agreement to remain silent about the summonses, which were a traumatic disturbance of her bourgeois life. Thus she had never been summoned by the Gestapo, had never been tortured, had never been forced to remain silent … the men at the office conveyed that to her, by letting her wait endlessly, late into night, until the building quieted down after the screams and yelling and slamming of doors).

This ironic and elliptic description of Claire's experience of torture by the Gestapo is symptomatic of how she deals with this experience throughout the rest of her life. Claire is for the most part silent about her experience during the war. Until late into their reunited life in Mainz, she has not even told Richard that the Gestapo raided their

apartment in Berlin during the war and confiscated most of their belongings: "Du hattest eine Hausdurchsuchung in Berlin? […] Und warum hast du mir nichts davon gesagt? Claire hob die Schultern und ließ sie wieder fallen. Du hast nicht danach gefragt und wir hatten so viel miteinander zu besprechen" (They searched the house in Berlin? […] And why didn't you tell me about that? Claire shrugged. You didn't ask. And we had so many other things to discuss) (197). The inability to talk about her experience finds a somatic symptom in Claire's kidney disease: "Nierensteine, Grieß in der Blase, Eiweißschaum im Urin sind die äußeren Zeichen, die Tränenflüssigkeit schwemmt etwas fort, das wie ein Kloß in ihr sitzt" (Kidney stones, renal gravel, protein in the urine are physical symptoms. Tears flush out what sits like a large lump in her) (393). Renal gravel and kidney stones are signs of a toxic fallout of loss and torture that Claire not only physically but psychically retains. Her illness expresses the leftovers of her past that she fails to address.

Aside from experiencing the loss of her children a second time after the war, Claire experiences moments of abandonment even during the postwar years of her marriage. Although already debilitated by her poor health, Claire's greatest motivation in her postwar life is reuniting the family. Her illness, the pain of passing her kidney stones, is described as an expression of her motivation "die Zügel in die Hand zu nehmen, um die Familienkutsche, die havariert ist aus bekannten Gründen, wieder in die richtige Spur zu bringen. Claire Kornitzer legt sich mächtig ins Zeug" (to take over the reins in order to get the family coach back on track, which crashed due to obvious reasons. Claire Kornitzer gave everything) (29). When Richard nearly loses his mind as a reaction to the bureaucratic difficulties and unfairness he is exposed to in the process of reestablishing

his life in postwar Germany, Claire shows more strength than her husband and provides him needed support. However, as Richard takes on his position as judge at a district court in Mainz and leaves without her due to the lack of accommodation for two people, something seems to irreparably break in Claire: "Etwas war an ein Ende gekommen … Es ist doch nur für eine kurze Zeit, wiederholte er, wir haben mehr ausgehalten, Claire. Ja, sagte sie, wir haben mehr ausgehalten, aber jetzt kann ich nicht mehr" (Something had come to an end .... It's just going to be for a short while, he repeated, we have gone through worse, Claire. Yes, she said, we have gone through worse, but now, I've reached my limit) (63). Being left behind by her husband again at a time in which reuniting her family seems to provide Claire the only strength to counteract the progression of her illness seems to leave her resigned. Claire's gait leaving the train station looks impaired as if affected by the symptoms of her illness: again, the progression of her kidney disease is closely related to the repeated experience of being left behind and loss (63).

After realizing that reuniting the family has been a fruitless endeavor, Claire attempts to resume her professional life and experiences another impediment. In what looks like an attempt to escape their petit bourgeois existence in suburban Mainz, Claire gets the idea to open a movie theater in the city. In the habit of her prior professional independence as business woman and manager in the film industry and main breadwinner for the family, Claire walks into a bank to apply for a business loan. The clerk addresses her as *Frau Landgerichtsdirektor* (Richard's professional title), which defines Claire's position as secondary and inferior to her husband. She cannot negotiate with the bank clerk without her husband. The equal rights Claire experienced as a woman during the Weimar Republic have been abandoned in the regressive conservatism of early West

Germany.

What has been introduced by the bank's branch manager is continued by her husband. After running her idea by Richard, he abides by current conventions: "Die Frau eines höheren Beamten, die Frau eines Landgerichtdirektors – er dehnt die Vokale seines Titels ins Unermeßliche – kann nicht einfach eine Unternehmerin werden, und dazu noch auf einem so fragilen, nicht einzuschätzenden künstlerischen oder auch abschüssigen Feld" (The wife of an official, the wife of head of state justice – he stresses each syllable of his title expansively – can't just open her own business, let alone in such a fragile, unstable artistic, or even declining field) (381). Not only does Richard seem to be concerned how their current social environment will view Claire's possible future endeavor, he seems to have abandoned their former progressive values and adopted the much more conservative viewpoint dominating German society of the 1950s. He also diminishes his wife's professional endeavors, those that have formerly paid for his law degree. His reaction not only shows the decline of liberal values between the two time periods of democratic government; after not being able to live with her children, it leaves Claire with nothing left to strive for.

As Richard's obsessive pursuit of compensation for the losses that he and his family experienced during their persecution increases, Claire's health declines in equivalent intensity. This parallel development of the couple leads to their growing apart and culminates in Claire's accident while Richard is on a trip to Berlin negotiating with administrative authorities about his restitution. After her vertiginous fall down the stairs, Claire cannot raise herself and thus remains lying on the floor for several days. Claire never fully recovers from her fall and Richard places her in a nursing home where she

dies shortly thereafter. The "unausgesprochenen Vorwürfen" (unspoken reproaches) that stand between Richard and Claire reveal each departure that has taken place between the couple:

> Wenn du da gewesen wärst. Wenn du nicht emigriert wärst. Wenn wir beide nicht in eine so verstörende Situation gekommen wären. Wenn du von Bettnang nicht nach Mainz gegangen wärst. Wenn du nicht in Berlin auf der Suche nach den Wertpapieren gewesen wärst. (464)
>
> (If you had only been there. If you had not emigrated. If we hadn't gotten into such a disturbing situation. If you hadn't left Bettnang to go to Mainz. If you hadn't been in Berlin to go after our securities).

The list of separations describes Claire's postwar life, although here portrayed as Richard's inner voice, as a continuous situation of feeling abandoned, also by her husband, that finally leads to her death.

Krechel creates in Claire an image of a German female victim figure of the 20th century whose life reflects the historical events of that time. While in terms of women's rights the time of the Weimar Republic is described as most promising for Claire, during the so-called Third Reich, Claire experiences abandonment and victimization not only because of her mixed marriage but due to the political abandonment of women's rights as well. The decline of women's status is continued during the postwar years and does not improve during Claire's lifetime. Instead, it permeates society in a regressive way and even impacts her marriage, which reflects a great deal of gender equality during the prewar years. Thus Claire as a historicized figure provides a gendered perspective on the history of the 20th century, which does not herald West German postwar recovery but describes it as a period of continuous decline from a woman's and mother's perspective.

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Richard also experiences continuous situations of abandonment, yet his status of abandonment is much more ambiguous than Claire's. Aside from losing his children, Richard's abandonment is mainly related to his political situation. The point of departure for these postwar circumstances of abandonment is the persecution starting with the takeover by the Nazis. His situation as formerly persecuted and displaced person continuously has an effect on his postwar life in Germany and creates and maintains the sense of marginalization. After living for ten years in exile, Richard's path of reintegration to Germany is paved with obstacles. Each one of them is a reminder of his persecution. As he requests the benefits which he heard returning refugees are entitled to receive, the postwar administrative authorities explain in writing that he had been denationalized in 1942 (*nota bene* by the Nazis) and therefore the German authorities would not be responsible for him as they serve only German citizens (45). It is a glitch in the system, but the officials' inability to see the moral implication and the actual implications for victims of this glitch is outrageous. Richard is abandoned by his own country a second time when he actually should be restituted for his persecution. Instead the denationalization foreshadows Richard's failed reintegration. Henceforth he experiences continuous gestures of discrimination that dominate his life and continue his state of abandonment.

These gestures of discrimination start even before Richard starts his job as chief judge of the district court in Mainz. When Richard receives his appointment, one of his former colleagues, now a lawyer in the district of the court, suggests changing his mind about coming to Mainz. Richard remembers this colleague, Erich Damm, as a person

with a "gewisse Schneidigkeit, einen asketischen Eifer, der noch keine Richtung hatte (glaubte Kornitzer)" (certain edginess, an ascetic fervor that hadn't found its direction yet [Kornitzer believed]), thus hinting at a potential convinced and active Nazi. Damm describes in his letter an utterly difficult scenario of current life in Mainz with no place to live due to its destruction, which turns out to be an act of deterrence and therefore an attempt at keeping Richard from resuming his profession in the Federal Republic of Germany (62). This letter starts for Richard a continuous demoralizing process that accompanies his whole life in the *Bundesrepublik*.

During his first job evaluating surveys at a denazification branch of the French interim government, Richard felt as if he got into an assembly line of bystanders ("er war in eine Mitläuferfabrik geraten"). Yet, in the transition to his professional rehabilitation the text demonstrates the infiltration of Nazi ideology in West Germany's jurisdiction: a covert but widespread force that not only becomes a continuous obstacle in Richard's professional life but also means a return to the lion's den, to exactly those who were responsible for the loss of his career in the first place: "Ein neues demokratisches Deutschland, ein Glück, vorbereitet und geschenkt von den Befreiern, so sah er das, ein Glück zu dem er seinen Beitrag leisten wollte. Und nun fühlte er sich allein mit diesem Blick, furchtbar alleingelassen" (a new democratic Germany, how fortunate, prepared by and a gift from the liberators. That's how he saw it. A fortunate opportunity to which he wanted to contribute. And now he felt lonely with this view, terribly abandoned) (433). Richard's postwar professional life is underlined by an ongoing sense of being left out.

The demoralizing experience of continuous discrimination culminates in Richard's fight for restitution. The processing of the applications for compensation is

long and complicated and in most cases, such as in Richard's, do not come to any result and simply end in "ruhen lassen" (suspended) due to the supposed lack of necessary information (391). Old ideological energies are easily channeled into the faultfinding small-mindedness of German bureaucracy. The former victims undergo, yet again, a process of bureaucratic and informal subjection. The apparatus of bureaucracy and its semantics surrounding this new law shows a regression toward the old victim-perpetrator positions so that the act of compensation turns into yet another act of victimization.

As district judge positioned at the core of the country's political machinery, Richard not only experiences repeated victimization by the inadequate compensation act and its inappropriate handling, he becomes repeatedly offended and discouraged in his sense of justice by the exposure to what happens behind the curtain of West German executive authorities. As part of his work, he reads numerous verdicts that expose thinly veiled former Nazi ideology and that "rüttel[n] an seinem Rechtsempfinden wie eine eisige Sturmbö" (shake his sense of justice like a frosty gust of wind) (393). As an insider still marginalized, Richard challenges the system: for his own affairs he hires a qualified lawyer to pursue his compensation, "[a]us der Verfolgung seiner Person ist eine Verfolgung seiner Ansprüche geworden" (his persecution turned into the persuit/persecution of his rights) (449). He does not accept rejections and lives from appeal to appeal. His life becomes dominated by paperwork, so that the storyline of the novel disappears behind the quotation of his legal correspondence. Richard starts to fight back but in doing so, a side of him gradually assimilates to his enemy. In his fervor in the fight for his restitution, Richard loses sight of Claire's needs, which leads to the couple's growing apart and the decline of their health as discussed above. Richard is partially

responsible for this decline. Thus his situation as abandoned by the *Bundesrepublik* becomes complicated by the process of abandoning his wife.

Another incident, which happens at Richard's work, also illustrates his gradual assimilation to the social context by which he is victimized. Simultaneous with the legal battle for restitution, he challenges the system at work with what falls under the chapter title *Die Tat* (the deed) (411). Richard opens one of his regular court appointments with a quotation of the West German constitution: "*Niemand darf wegen seines Geschlechtes, seiner Abstammung, seiner Rasse, seiner Sprache, seiner Heimat und Herkunft, seines Glaubens, seiner religiösen und politischen Anschauungen benachteiligt oder bevorzugt werden .... Richter sind unabhängig und nur dem Gesetz unterworfen*" (No person shall be favoured or disfavoured because of sex, parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith, or religious or political opinions …. Judges shall be independent and subject only ot the law [translation Christian Tomuschat and David P. Currie *Gesetze im Internet*]) (414). The quote has nothing to do with the legal matter of the court appointment and can therefore only be read as Richard's plea for a different, personal concern. Before the backdrop of Richard's position as judge and the ambiguous book title *Landgericht* (which can also be read as tribunal of a country), his quote resembles a judgment rather than a deed: He judges not only the district court of Mainz but the entire West German executive authorities as not fulfilling these two paragraphs of the West German constitution, and he blames enduring Nazi ideology. Against the background of his unsuccessful fight for restitution and the ongoing discrimination he endures, the reading of the paragraphs is a reference to the failure of postwar German democracy to live up to its values as constituted in its law. He therefore indirectly underlines how he, in

turn, feels judged and continuously marginalized not only in his professional environment but in his own country.

The reaction of Richard's superiors at the district court and beyond evokes more the impression of handling a criminal offense and largely confirms Richard's message. It spreads like a wildfire through the lines of authorities, who assign a colleague of Richard "Kornitzer auszurichten, daß dieser sich um 17 Uhr im Präsidentenzimmer des Landgerichts einfinden solle, also die Zeugen zuerst und dann derjenige, dessen Tat sie bezeugen sollen" (to tell Kornitzer to come to the president's office at the state court at 5 pm. The witnesses are summoned first, then the one whose deed they are supposed to testify) (415). Richard's quote is treated as a legal incident involving vocabulary such as *witness* and *deed*, whereas the hearing requests the witnesses' statements before Richard gets to explain his quote, treating Richard as an accused, yet nobody reveals what he is accused of. While the incident is being treated like a misdemeanor and causes a large uproar, everyone remains guarded in the statements: nobody provides an interpretation of Richard's quote. Richard causes a great reaction that reveals the size of the bureaucratic apparatus of the executive authorities behind which everyone seems to hide his or her political agenda.

Yet Richard also takes advantage of the bureaucratic and juristic convolution in order to hide himself behind it after his "deed." When his colleague forwards the request from Richard's superiors to make a statement about his quoting the constitution, Richard pleads he will not make an oral statement, as the request has been forwarded by someone who is junior to him and not in an appropriate written form (416). He hides behind bureaucratic excuses and formalities and later behind his fragile health. His written

statement about the quotes is vacant of any contextualization:

> Der Zweck deckte sich mit dem Inhalt der Artikel des Grundgesetzes selbst. Kritik an irgendwelchen Maßnahmen einer Behörde wurde in keiner Weise zum Ausdrucke gebracht …. Wenn ich nach meinen Gedanken und inneren Vorstellungen danach gefragt werde, so bin ich überfordert. (434)
>
> (The purpose was the content of the articles. There was no specific criticism of the method of any particular bureaucratic institution intended …. When asked about my motivation or conviction in regard to the incident, you catch me at an impasse).

Personal overload is indeed the reason why Richard is incapable of standing up for what he initiated by reading the paragraphs from the constitution, yet the overload does not originate in a lack of well-thought-out political motives behind his choice. He does not stand up for the political message he initiated by quoting these two laws. Aside from his mental and physical exhaustion, which explain Richard's hiding from the consequences of his action, Krechel offers the possibility that Richard is simply spineless—not unlike his counterparts. Krechel describes Richard as going through a development that reveals an ambiguous character. While Richard is infused with enthusiasm upon his return to help build "Ein neues demokratisches Deutschland, ein Glück, vorbereitet und geschenkt von den Befreiern," his life as abandoned in the *Mitläuferfabrik* soon kills this enthusiasm and, disillusioned, Richard remains fighting for his restitution. Yet, aside from being abandoned among the former Nazis and their followers, "the interweaving of social dependencies" of this postwar *Mitläuferfabrik* has an effect on Richard in so far as he himself shows signs of a *Mitläufer*.

Richard's time in exile in Cuba also reveals the ambivalence of his victim status. While he lives the life of the abandoned as he lives among a group of refugees not integrated into Cuban culture, he leads a structured and safe life in Cuba. It is relatively

comfortable compared to the experiences of other victims of Nazism and also compared with the grief Richard is going through in his postwar life. The inheritance from his mother allows him to bribe people when needed (278). The ability to bribe is described as making life much easier for the refugee in Cuba, who otherwise lacks any privilege in the host country. For Richard, bribing means essential help in getting his job, which, although illegal at first, provides stability and a reliable income. Even Richard's social life entails a group that shares similar experiences of political or ethnic persecution, many of whom resume political activism in Cuba. Richard enjoys the social support of a likeminded group, a situation which Claire most likely does not have in Nazi Germany. Moreover, over time Richard seems to overcome the loss of his bond with Claire and his family as he is ready to stay with Charidad and would raise their child together with her.

Richard is portrayed within the complex and nuanced circumstances as victim and as privileged at the same time. Within this framework, the complexity of the social situations in which Richard is abandoned or victimized shows to various extents his own complicity. His story of abandonment is not so much prioritizing the victimization of Jews during the Holocaust, but rather, *Landgericht* reflects upon Germany and an aspect of its history during the 20th century through the life of Richard Kornitzer, a German judge, husband, and father with a Jewish background. Contrary to the dictum in *Väterliteratur*, the parent figures in *Landgericht* do not serve the image of the accused who receive the blame for history. Rather, Claire's and Richard's lives, reconstructed with the help of archival research, serve as lenses into history in order to grapple with its complexity and thus to better understand it.

The abandoned parent figures in *Landgericht* not only experience the loss of their

children twice, but their own country abandons them twice as well: first under the Nazi regime and second by early West Germany as returning exiles and former dissidents. As the latter, the two represent a chapter in Germany's postwar history which has been abandoned as well: the life of Germany's expellees and their attempts to return to their former home country. Thus *Landgericht* provides a perspective which fits the common context of decentralizing the Holocaust in the texts discussed in this chapter. The relevancy of this decentralized view to this aspect of history is shown in the enormous increase in refugees due to war and persecution in the second decade of the 21st century. In her speech upon receiving the German Book Award, Krechel draws attention to the contemporary migration issue in Europe. In a less nuanced appeal, Krechel asks her listeners to become active against Europe shutting out people in need. Her book shows how expulsion, the separation of families, and discrimination against them can destroy lives even if they survive.

Per Leo's *Flut und Boden* and *Der Wille zum Wesen*

Within a few months of 2013 and 2014, two publications by 1972-born newcomer writer and historian Per Leo made headlines in multiple renowned German feuilletons. The first one is his dissertation: *Der Wille zum Wesen: Weltanschauungskultur, charakterologisches Denken und Judenfeindschaft in Deutschland 1890-1940* (2013, herafter abreviated as *Der Wille*). The second one, *Flut und Boden* (2014), which was short-listed for the Leipzig Book Prize in 2014, is called a family novel, but resembles more an autobiographical essay revolving around the author's paternal family history of the 20th century.

Both texts, the theoretical one as well as the prose piece, are driven by the same

concern: the implementation of German *Weltanschauungskultur* of the 19th and 20th century during the development of modernity and its contribution to the breeding ground for German-specific racism and the Holocaust. Leo's concept of *Weltanschuungskultur* entails *Weltanschauung* within its social and philosophical disputation through which it provides a sense of cultural belonging (*Der Wille*).[14] While *Flut und Boden* reveals this concern rather indirectly, it is the underlying research question of *Der Wille*. In the latter, Leo follows the traces of essentialist thinking in the German history of ideas in the 19th and early 20th century and illustrates an aspect in this development which is intrinsic to the German context. He describes this aspect as characterological thinking which aims at classifying and typifying human diversity on a self-proclaimed rational basis (*Der Wille* 29). The family novel includes this development as the mainstream bourgeois cultural heritage of the two grandfather figures, each of whom stands for separate, but at the same time paradoxically connected, paths of characterological thinking.

*

In order to understand the link between Leo's text and what role the abandoned child plays in that connection, I shall first summarize both texts. *Der Wille* describes a thread in the 19th- and early 20th-century history of thinking starting with Goethe's monistic approach to natural sciences. Leo follows the implementations of Goethe's thinking through his late 19th-century promoters, such as Rudolf Steiner and Ernst Haeckel, all of whom have in common an approach to the world based on a subjective experience. The shared subjective experience was funneled into a cultural sense of belonging, which Leo summarizes as German *Weltanschauungskultur* (*Der Wille* 25).

[14] Within the German context, Leo describes *Weltanschauung* as a term referring to the individual's and society's cognitive, philosophical, and religious orientation toward the world.

Leo's monograph has four parts. In Part I Leo describes large-scale societal changes such as transforming social orders and increasing urbanization that yielded demand for characterizing and typifying people based on subjectively perceived features. Leo concludes that categorizing and labeling one's social and natural environment—the basis of characterological thinking— helped maintain much-needed orientation in an ever-altering, thus unrecognizable and threatening, world.

The focus of the second part is the relationship between German history of ideas and the development of industrialization. Leo argues that the German school of thought about distinguishing and differentiation promoted by great names like Goethe, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche created the basis of characterological thinking, which later became a cultural comfort zone for the German educated bourgeoisie in the wake of an increasingly industrialized society. The third part gives insight into how characterological thinking based upon differentiation and distinction yielded a specific image of "the Jew." Paradoxically, Leo claims, the key feature of Jewish people in this 19th-century characterological assessment was that they could camouflage any characteristics, thus attributing to Jewishness an inherent falsehood.

In Part IV Leo exemplifies the application and impact of characterological thinking around the turn of the century with Ludwig Klages' graphology. Klages (1872-1956), a chemist by training, was a German thinker and self-trained psychologist who became famous for his method of handwriting analysis. The principle of Klages' graphology was to attribute specific character traits or even psychological problems to certain graphic features of one's handwriting (*Der Wille*). This method gained widespread popularity among all social classes, ethnic backgrounds, and across the

political spectrum in the beginning of the 20th century. Leo illustrates a connection between the expansive acceptance of diagnosing someone's personality by means of the graphic outcome of the person's handwriting and the acceptance of a racist and totalitarian regime. Although being a way of thinking acknowledging individuality, Klages's approach was adopted by totalitarian Nazi ideology, according to Leo, since *character* was seen, just like *race*, as a given variable that constitutes a human being and was therefore a useful addition to Nazi raciology (*Der Wille* 563-64).

Klages' role in German history of ideas as a link between German *Weltanschauungskultur* and Nazi racism is also a key moment in *Flut und Boden*. In this text, Klages' graphology connects two otherwise disconnected brothers, Friedrich and Martin Leo, both born in the first decade of the 20th century. Both brothers show interest in graphology at some point in their lives. It is the only interest they share. Leo follows the connecting link in the lives of these two diametrical grandfather figures who have their roots in the so-called German *Bildungsbürgertum* of the 19th century. He creates a picture of a family history that is interwoven with the legacy of German history of ideas of the 19th century. Yet with the two concrete figures Martin and Friedrich, Leo illustrates what his analysis of the history of ideas cannot: two diverging individual paths taken in the dawn of the Third Reich

Martin and Friedrich lose their father, Heinrich, during World War I. Leo follows the brothers' lives after the loss based on written records, personal documents, and personal accounts of family members. Remnants of their family's *Bildungstradition* provide both brothers a coping mechanism for the loss of the father and the interwar years. Both figures are described as having appreciated and acknowledged

characterological thinking as applied in Klages' graphology, yet while Friedrich's life continuously shows the strong conviction of racist Nazi ideology that culminates in his position as head of the SS department of racial affairs, Martin is an anthroposophist, devoted to humanism, and an avid student of Goethe's writing. Both characters share only one thing: the roots of their way of thinking are in typifying and classifying subjectively experienced phenomena.

*

Leo's texts have received little scholarly attention, yet journalistic critiques emerged in abundance after their publication. Thomas Steinfeld praises *Der Wille* for "[die] Entfaltung einer halbvergessenen, aber folgenreichen intellektuellen Bewegung, die im Persönlichen vollzieht, was der Rassismus mit dem Volk zu veranstalten trachtete" (the development of a half-forgotten, but far-reaching and momentous intellectual movement, which does to the individual what racism does to one people [tranlsation mine]) (*Detektivische Utopien* Süddeutsche Zeitung). Steinfeld focuses on the successful depiction of a German continuity, which has not been addressed with that clarity before. Historian Nicolas Berg's review on H-Net, an online humanities network, also underlines the impressive intellectual workmanship of depicting the development of a way of thinking that helped establish the violent racism during the Nazi Regime:

> Sein Fokus ist mehr auf Gesten des Denkens, auf dessen methodische Voraussetzungen gerichtet, als auf dessen Inhalte .... Wäre dies der Fachbeitrag eines Musikwissenschaftlers so hätten wir eine Abhandlung über Rhythmus und Harmonielehre vor uns, keines über konkrete Kompositionen oder über eine bestimmte Musik (diese dienen lediglich der Illustration). (Nicolas Berg H-Net)
>
> (His focus is a way of thinking and its intellectual prerequisites, rather than its content …. If [*Der Wille]* were the academic contribution of a musical scholar, we would read a book about rhythm and harmony, not about concrete composition or a specific piece of music [they only serve as examples]

[translation mine]).

Berg points out that the continuity which Leo reveals is not so much based on specific ideas but rather on the methodology of how the ideas are developed. Jan Küverler points out in his review in the German newspaper *Die Welt* how Leo's depiction of the two different personalities of his grandfather and his brother further emphasize the method of thinking and connects *Der Wille* and *Flut and Boden* as "Geschwisterbücher, um ein Geschwisterpaar zu verstehen" (sibling books for understanding a pair of siblings [translation mine]) ("Die Gegenwart ist in der Pflicht" *Die Welt*). This analysis also considers both texts as corresponding to each other. While I agree with the critics' emphasis of Leo's strength in depicting the comprehensive continuity behind a German-specific way of thinking, I argue that the connecting link between the two books is a situation of abandonment. In *Flut und Boden*, Martin and Friedrich are the abandoned children due to their loss of their father at an early age. The father's death has decisive influence on the direction each of their lives takes. Furthermore, I argue that both of Leo's texts are not only *Geschwisterbücher* because they illustrate in different ways the effects of German characterological thinking, but also because the motivation for characterological thinking as Leo describes in *Der Wille* reflects a certain form of abandonment as well. Thus, like *Landgericht*, Leo's texts deal with specific abandoned individuals, in this case two brothers, who also refer to a form of abandonment which opens up a far-reaching and less known aspect of German history.

Although Leo writes about his familial connection to the Holocaust and World War II, both of his texts historicize the event. While Leo identifies himself clearly as the first-person narrator and thus as the grandson of Friedrich Leo in *Flut und Boden*, it is as

much the historian Leo who assesses his family's history within the context of World War II, the Holocaust, German *Bildungstradition*, and characterological thinking. Especially against the backdrop of *Der Wille*, *Flut und Boden* resembles more a historical case study rather than a generational novel. Leo addresses the children of his grandfather—those who are still alive—in codes only revealing their gender and birth year (M42, W37, etc.) to protect their privacy. On one hand, the coding alludes to the racist ideologies of the so-called Third Reich in general and Friedrich Leo's position as the head of SS racial affairs in particular and thus represents the continuous effect that time had on his family. On the other hand it characterizes Leo's own distanced and historicized approach to his family history. Furthermore, Leo's first-person narrator, while on one hand the grandson, reveals characteristics of an omniscient auctorial narrator who, at times, takes on the perspective of other characters and describes the world from their point of view. In these moments Leo parts from his position as grandson in favor of showing his characters' embeddedness in history.

Yet, by including himself and the story of his family in the historicized approach, Leo maintains, as Berg underlines, a connection to the present:

> Mit der Einführung der Figur des eigenen Großvaters und dem Motiv der von diesem ererbten Bibliothek macht der Autor zu Beginn von „Der Wille zum Wesen" deutlich, dass diese Kultur [charakterologisches Denken] nicht nur symbolisch in ihren in die Gegenwart hineinragenden Artefakten präsent ist. Sie ist ein gesamtes, nicht nur literarisches Erbe, das auch in der Gegenwart, auch im Autor und auch in den Lesern seines Buchs Wirkung getan hat und Wirkung tut – und dies umso mehr dort, wo man sich der festen Überzeugung hingibt, dass all das lange her und längst vorbei ist. (H-Net)
>
> (The description of the grandfather figure and his library in the introduction to *Der Wille* exemplifies that this aspect of German culture [characterological thinking] is not only currently symbolically present in German culture in some sort of artefacts of that time. Rather, it is a general inheritance, which has had an effect on and still is effective in the present, in the author, and in the readers of his

> book, and that even more so when one assumes that he is talking about a long-ago past which is over [translation mine]).

Contrary to the missing autobiographical aspect and the disconnection between narrated time and narrating time in Krechel's *Landgericht*, Leo's texts show a unique combination of historicizing the Holocaust and revealing the autobiographical connection.

However, similar to Richard Kornitzer in *Landgericht*, Leo's family history serves as a personalized lens onto the history of the 20th century. Jan Küverler claims in his review, "[Leo] baut das 20. Jahrhundert wie eine Drehbüne auf [sic] und füllt die Kulissen mit Requisiten und Figuren" (Leo arranges the 20th century like a revolving stage and fills the set with props and characters) ("Die Gegenwart ist in der Pflicht"). Thus Leo's focus in his "family novel" on the familial relationship between the members serves more the purpose of understanding each of them, particularly the grandfather figures, within their historical context rather than within the family dynamic. Although the Holocaust plays a central role, the way Leo addresses it on this "revolving stage" is by analyzing a way of thinking, which evolved to reveal a workable compatibility with the so-called Third Reich (*Der Wille* 23). Thus Leo is less concerned with Nazi ideology because, "zieht man nämlich allzu scharfe Grenzen um bestimmte rechte Weltanschauung, waren 'die Nazis' immer nur die anderen – eine Verteidungsstrategie, derer sich das gesamte soziale Spektrum nach 1945 bedienen konnte" (if one draws too clear of a line around rightwing ideology then the Nazis were always only the others – a defense strategy which conveniently served the entire social spectrum after 1945) (*Der Wille* 23). Leo shifts the focus from the perpetrators as conceptualized as the evil other to a large historical spectrum particularly before but also after the Holocaust—thus decentralizing the event—in order to find proof which discredits the myth that the

perpetrators were others.

By addressing the continuities on the stage of history between the 19th century and the Holocaust, Leo picks up on a historical approach to the Holocaust advocated by a number of Anglo-Saxon and German historians, which was largely known as the *Sonderweg*-debate (Special Path) of the 1970s and 80s.[1] During that time period a group of scholars, most of them associated with the university of Bielefeld, revisited arguments which several German scholars such as Helmuth Plessner had introduced earlier in the 20th century. In his book *Die verspätete Nation* (1934), Plessner argues that while other Western states developed the beginnings of democracy in the 17th and 18th century, the Holy Roman Empire was falling apart and prevented the German-speaking lands to take part in the movement of democratization. The most significant group of historians in the later *Sonderweg*-debate, who vigorously supported the causal connection between the 19th and the 20th century in Germany and the idea, were Heinrich August Winkler, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Jürgen Kocka, and Volker Berghahn.

According to Hans-Ulrich Wehler, the German-speaking lands politically and culturally followed a special path in the 19th and 20th centuries. According to the theory, due to the lack of a centralized monarchy governing the prenational German *Kleinstaaten*, Germany entered the process of industrialization, and hence of democratization, belatedly. As Germany continued to be governed by aristocratic, anti-parliamentarian forces throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, cultural development during that time focused less on political and societal affairs and remained, for the most part, politically sequestered in the intellectual realms of the humanities. According to the proponents of the theory, both World Wars and the Holocaust were results of the

repercussions of the *Sonderweg*.[15]

Criticism of the *Sonderweg* theory entailed the argument that one can only determine a specific German path if a comparison to a norm is possible. Most scholars argue that too little comparative research is available to conclude a special path. Moreover, some scholars, such as Hans-Christof Kraus, question the plausibility of the continuity between traditional conservatism and Nazi ideology.[16] German history had been mostly seen as "permanently fractured history" as Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer claim (*Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* 15).

The work of historian Helmut Walser Smith, however, describes a revival of the examination of continuities between 19th- and 20th-century German history, which Leo's work also accounts for. Walser Smith argues in his 2008 article, *When the Sonderweg Debate Left Us,* that the criticism of the *Sonderweg* theory stalled all scholarly perspective on continuity between the 19th and 20th century and claims that in historiography since the *Sonderweg* debate "the Nazi period seems divorced from any connection to a longer view of German history and culture" (*When the Sonderweg 25*). Walser Smith's book of the same year, "The Continuity of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race Across the Long Nineteenth Century," offers several continuities between 19th- and 20th-century German history. In the introduction to the book, Walser Smith describes an etching by Albrecht Altdorfer depicting the Regensburg synagogue and a couple of melancholic looking worshipers leaving the building through a shadowy hallway. The etching was made on the day before the synagogue was razed in 1519 (1).

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[15] See Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen. Deutsche Geschichte vom Ende des Alten Reiches bis zum Untergang der Weimarer Republik*, and Hans-Ulrich Wehler *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871–1918*.

[16] See *Altkonservativismus und moderne politische Rechte* in Thomas Nipperdey's *Weltbürgerkrieg der Ideologien. Antworten an Ernst Nolte. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag*.

Walser Smith describes looking at the etching as a key moment which explains his approach to emphasize continuities in German history in his work:

> [N]ot that 1519 prefigured 1933, or that Germany was already on a special path, but I did feel that there was a connection, etched in stone and evident in the architecture, that my training as historian hardly equipped me to talk about. It is perhaps indicative that historians have come to think of these matters not because historical argument necessitates revision but because the precise poetic eye of W. G. Sebald forced us to look at the landscape of the past, its hidden traces and enduring shadows, with new intensity. (3)

Walser Smith explains his new emphasis on continuities through the influence of Sebald's literary work, presumably making his work as historian more narrative and literary, like Per Leo's. Moreover, Walser Smith places an emphasis on the observer figure in his historiography, which implements a continuity not only between two past events but also to the present observer. Leo applies this emphasis as well in *Flut und Boden* with his first-person narrator position. Walser Smith goes on to explain that his approach to the past shows "an emphasis on human connections, not only the proximate causes but also the longer lineages, without assuming that continuities run in only one direction or that past events determine future disasters" (6). He provides a new assessment of continuity in history that is less deterministic and is more nuanced than the approach of the *Sonderweg* historians and requires a certain degree of empathy by the observer.

Leo's approach also differs from other histories of German ideologies in that he does not create "geistige Verbindungslinien zwischen Kopfgeburten wie 'Irrationalismus' und 'Gegenaufklärung'" (theoretical links between intellectual concepts such as "irrationalism" and "antienlightenment" [all translations of Leo's texts mine]) (*Der Wille* 30). His approach is antitypological and attempts to avoid epistemological categories as

he reconstructs a way of thinking that is not particularly unique to certain schools of thought, ideas, or disciplines. Leo's work—both texts—provides a much larger focal width as it illustrates the paths of an issue by bringing together authors, philosophers, and mainstream culture that would typically not be investigated under the same rubric. Also, his focal point is human connection rather than that of ideas, which makes his approach similarly nuanced. Looking at Walser Smith and Leo's work as revisiting the continuities between the 19th and 20th centuries shows a new emphasis on giving a narrative voice to the small links of a wide historical spectrum, which then stick out in significance despite their smallness. One of the small links in Leo's work that makes the half-forgotten but momentous intellectual movement unfold, I argue, is the motif of the abandoned child.

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Corresponding to the development of modernity, Leo provides in *Der Wille* several situations in the German history of ideas which are characterized as abandonment by a homogeneous framework of meaning:

> [D]as rasante Tempo, in dem sich im letzten Drittel des 19. Jahrhunderts nicht nur die Wissenschaften, sondern auch die politischen Verhältnisse entwickelten, rief ein weltanschauliches Bedürfnis auf den Plan, das mehr verlangte als einen bloßen Überblick über die stetig wachsende Fülle der Tatsachen: eine Zusammenschau, die wissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse nicht nur kompilierte und verständlich machte, sondern dadurch vereinheitlichte, dass sie ihnen Sinn verlieh. (*Der Wille* 176)
>
> (The rapid pace in which not only sciences but also different polical circumstances evolved in the last third of the 19th century, raised the desire for *Weltanschauung* that required more than just a mere survey of the constantly growing abundance of data and facts: a synopsis which not only compilated and explained empirical data, but was able to standardize by providing meaning to them).

Leo describes a mentality towards the intellectual and political changes in the 19th century that evoked the fear of being abandoned in a state that lacks purpose and meaning

in life. The insecurity leads to the attempt to reconfigure (through characterological thinking) one's environment in order to allow familiarity to govern the perceived unknown. This fear of abandonment includes scenarios from the resistance of German idealism toward the dualist structure, toward men's self-determination, and thus toward the profanation of men in association with enlightenment. As modernity progresses, the decrease of reliable patriarchal structures and the increase of urban mass culture causes the same type of discomfort to continue.

Goethe's theory of colors serves as Leo's historical starting point in the development of characterological thinking. Goethe opposes Newton's theory of the color spectrum contained in white light. Leo illustrates Goethe's perception-based outlook on science as one vantage point for characterology as it denies objective theoretical explanations and requires the generalization of a large quantity of individual subjective sensual perceptions in order to understand the world (*Der Wille* 183-83). Goethe's critique of Newton's findings was not directed at some intellectual detail; it denied the modern scientific approach altogether:

> Als Theoretiker der Optik war Newton für Goethe mehr als nur ein intellektueller Gegner. Er diente ihm als Symbolfigur einer Wissenschaft, welche die *Abspaltung des Menschen von der Natur betreibt*, indem sie die anschauliche Welt für oberflächlich erklärt und die Gesetzte der Natur für so verborgen, dass sie nur mit Hilfe apparativer Experimente und in der Sprache der Mathematik erschlossen werden können. Newtons These, das Sonnenlicht sei ein weißes Strahlenbündel, das alle Farben in sich erhalte, bekämpfte Goethe wie die *Ursünde* der modernen Wissenschaft. (*Der Wille* 180, emphasis mine)
>
> As a theorist of optics, Newton meant more than just an intellectual rival to Goethe. He served as a symbolic figure of an intellectual discipline, which propagates *the separation of the human from nature* by declaring the observable world as superficial and laws of nature as so elusive that they can only be understood through technical experiments and through the language of mathematics. Goethe fought Newton's thesis saying that sun light is a spectrum which contains all colors like the *original sin* of modern science).

Leo's description of Goethe's denial includes strong vocabulary such as "separation from nature" and "original sin" which categorizes Goethe's critique as fear of abandonment. Not only the vehemence in Goethe's reaction to Newton but Leo's use of "original sin" to describe Goethe's view exemplifies that the fear of abandonment was existential: modern science meant to give up a paradisiacal existence. While Goethe does not specifically acknowledge God any longer in his thinking, his monistic thinking is evidenced by the idea of a consistent essence (*Wesen*) in the world that provides a paternal function.[17] Goethe sees this divine instance, which still has a place in his thinking, threatened by modern science.

Goethe's attack on Newton's theory bears an immanent sense of abandonment which entails the fear of losing something that provides meaning and purpose. Consequentially, the dualistic approach of natural science bears, quite contrary to explaining the world and thus making it more familiar, the threat of estrangement and alienation from nature. Goethe reveals a philosophical separation anxiety towards the takeover of a dualistic outlook on the world that creates in his case a sense of abandonment. He insists on a sense of ownership and agency in the realm of perception that eventually leads to the centralization of the individual and therefore allows subjective experiences as orientation in the natural and eventually in the social world.

As Leo points out, Goethe's thinking gains particular popularity when the effects of modernity become increasingly noticeable as growing estrangement in the social

[17] The enlightened approach to the world abandons, according to Goethe, human corporeality by not relying on the sensual experience but on abstract and hidden, thus inadequate, intellectual formulas (*Der Wille* 182-84). In Goethe's view, the observation through each sensory organ is the indispensable place of true revelation of nature, as each sensory experience bears an equivalent to the observed phenomenon in itself (183). Thus human being and nature stand to each other in a monadic relationship which is held together by the principle of a greater all-pervading essence.

world. One of the most significant promoters who helped establish the Goethean approach in mainstream German *Bildungsbürgertum* at the beginning of modernity was Rudolf Steiner, founder of the modern *Weltanschauungs*-movement Anthroposophy.[18] During times of quickly increasing change in social patterns, Goethe's approach serves as a useful tool in the attempt to make oneself feel *at home* by identifying and typifying the social world around by means of one's own perception and therefore one's own needs.

In order to illustrate the issue of estrangement in modernity, Leo chooses the discourse revolving around metropolization at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. Leo's vantage point is the collapse of the old social order and, most of all, its visual signs for social orientation:

> Zum einen steigerte der Niedergang repräsentativer Zeichensysteme die Anonymität unter Unbekannten. Personale Fremdheit wurde so von einer Ausnahme zum Regelfall des sozialen Lebens, die Oberfläche des Körpers vom Paradigma der Ordnung zum Paradigma der Täuschung. Zum anderen steigerte gerade das moderne Leben die räumliche Nähe unter Fremden in einem unbekannten Ausmaß. (40-41)
>
> (On one hand, the decline of representative systems of codes increased the anonymity of strangers. Rather than the usual exception, anonymity in social life became the norm. The surface of the body transformed from a paradigm of order to a paradigm of deception. On the other hand, modern life increased spatial proximity among strangers to a heretofore unparalleled extent).

Leo is aiming at estrangement, growing anonymity, and spatially dense living circumstances as a driving factor for an increasing sense of abandonment and thus for the need of characterological thinking.

Leo describes how cultural texts of that time express a desire to train the eye in

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[18] Anthroposophy is a philosophy founded by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) which is based on the assumption of a spiritual world. The teachings of Anthroposophy entail a mental practice, which is supposed to provide entrance into the spiritual world. Rudolf Steiner bases the practice on Goethe's way of observing through each sensory organ in order to gain true revelation of nature (or in Anthroposophy: the spiritual world) (see Heiner Ullrich's. *Rudolf Steiner: Leben und Lehre*).

order to keep a distance to and, at the same time, unmask the unknown through extensive and intensive observation. While some, like Georg Simmel, Kurt Tucholsky, and Edgar Allen Poe, focus on the failure of readability within the visual space of urbanity, others, like Ernst Jünger and August Sanders (through photography), take on an inventory of the unknown in order to establish a new visual category, life itself, that supplements the now by itself unreliable category of visual social insignia such as status-related clothing (*Der Wille* 74). As Leo refers to Martin Lindner (*Leben in der Krise*), the idea of life as a "supra-individual sphere of influence" is thought to be particularly visible in times of perceived large-scale cultural transitions and can therefore be utilized as a tool of social orientation during that time (74). Leo states that the signs of life as visual markers in the form of *Gestalt* were believed to be emotionally perceived rather than intellectually deciphered: "Zu ihrer Entschlüsselung vermag der Verstand nichts beizutragen. Ihr Zusammenhang muss zuerst geahnt, gefühlt, erlebt und 'geschaut' werden, damit man ihn dann interpretieren kann" (The mind is incapable of decoding them. One has to have a premonition of, or experience intuitively the context [of these visual markers] in order to be able to interprete them.) (74). Graphology of that time claims that someone's handwriting is that *Gestalt* of life and therefore promises a way of extracting supposedly essential knowledge about another person from the otherwise complex and confusing conglomerate of signs of modern urban life (78). The development of modernity in Germany created on a macrolevel a cultural situation of abandonment due to a world growing increasingly alien. Separating the known from the unknown elements in this world was for the purpose of making it feel less threatening and alienating. Yet, the categorization happened at the cost of further demonizing the unknown. Thus

increasingly aggressive energy was invested into the process of separating out the unknown to the degree of abandoning and destroying the categorized other.

*

Although a historical and in many ways outdated source, Alexander Mitscherlich's *Society without the Father* (1963) nonetheless provides a support for understanding the motif of the abandoned child as link between *Der Wille* and *Flut und Boden.* At his time of scholarship, Mitscherlich was also interested in the continuities that led up to World War II and the Holocaust as well as in the continuing aftereffects in German society. Although Leo provides a much more nuanced and more comprehensive insight into the continuities of the 19th and 20th centuries, *Society without the Father* shares the issue of visual disorientation as part of modernity and he associates it with a general state of fatherlessness, which connects the effects of industrialization with the fear of the loss of a paternal structure during German idealism. Mitscherlich describes in *Society without the Father* the situation of estrangement and the lack of reliable visual markers during modernity as a historical situation of abandonment which is caused, on one hand, by the increasing absence of an actual father figure and, on the other hand, by the disappearance of a collective hierarchical order based on paternalism. These two kinds of fatherlessness occur, according to Mitscherlich, due to the labor division in the wake of the industrial revolution: "the increase in specialization first has led to fatherlessness of the first degree; to the loss of the presence of the working father, or, … to a general weakening of the object relationships" (*Society without the Father* 278). Secondly, the division of labor and authority "has led to the creation of numerous specialist positions, each of which bears only slight traces of the process to which it

belongs" which, in turn, led to an abstraction of power as power is no longer solely associated with an individual but rather has been taken over by a system (276-77). Thus "[t]he fatherless … child grows up into an adult with no visible master, exercises anonymous functions, and is guided by anonymous functions" (278). The visual disorientation, the world around the individual of modern mass society, is caused by the actual and structural father figure becoming increasingly invisible. While Mitscherlich provides an assessment of German society in the late 19th and early 20th century that weighs too heavily on a gendered concept, important for this analysis is Mitscherlich's conception of society's struggle with the collapse of paternalism as support for the motif of the abandoned child as a concrete experience *and* a cultural situation of abandonment, specifically in Friedrich's case.

In *Flut und Boden,* Leo exemplifies by means of the main male figure of this prose text how German *Weltanschauungskultur* and characterological thinking is actually connected to the notion of fatherlessness and abandonment. Friedrich and Martin Leo's childhood in the second decade of the 20th century is affected by both the loss of their actual father due to the war and the structural societal changes of modernity.

Martin's and Friedrich's father, Heinrich Leo, represents a number of aspects associated with German *Weltanschauungskultur* and was thus one of the carriers of this culture in Leo's family. He was a high-ranking *Gymnasium* professor with a strong Protestant background and whose intellectual adherence Leo describes with a hierarchy of intellectual and spiritual figures such as "'Jesus,' 'Luther,' 'Goethe,' 'Kant,' and 'Bismarck'" (262). Heinrich represents the German nationalist idea, bringing together conservative antimodern, Protestant, and German *Bildungsbürgertum* values. He worries

about effeminacy of the German youth and publishes about premilitary education (*Jungdeutschland: Wehrerziehung der deutschen Jugend*), fostering soldierly masculinity and hardiness in order to prepare the youth for war and to serve the German cause (99-100). In Heinrich's eyes, the youth has become spoiled and corrupted by the urban modern lifestyle and needs to be reintroduced to the hard demands of the field (100). Before his deployment in World War I, Heinrich leaves behind a document of paternal guidelines for his children in case of his death. It calls for following his antimodern, strictly Protestant nationalist fervor. After he gets killed during the war, Martin and Friedrich both feel the loss of their father deeply, but each of them integrates and transforms his intellectual legacy in a different way.

Heinrich's oldest son, Martin, much to the father's chagrin, does not fit the image of a "tough boy." He is sensitive and suffers under the imposed tests of courage by the father that are supposed to toughen him up. Martin has a strong bond with his grandmother which his father associates with his supposed effeminate development and which drives him away from his father (*Flut* 92). Yet, Martin feels himself drawn to his father's *Bildungs*-legacy as *Gymnasialprofessor* which is represented by his *väterliches Reich*: his office expanding over the entire upper story of their Weser mansion. Heinrich retreats to his *Reich* for studying and lesson planning and mostly does not allow intrusion. Heinrich's office is an ominous and exclusive place underlining the father's authoritarian position. Only on special occasions is Martin allowed to visit him in his office. Yet in these moments, the educator in the father dedicates his attention entirely to reading to and showing his son around in his extensive library (95). Thus it is also a quasi-forbidden place of knowledge for Martin that triggers and fosters his intellectual

curiosity.

What first seems to be part of Heinrich's test of courage, namely taking Martin through the attic adjacent to his office to the top of the steeple, turns for Martin into a key moment of extending his realm of curiosity: an initial moment of fear is followed by illuminating perspectives of literally widening horizons (102). According to Leo, the 360° panorama twenty meters above ground resembles the moment of negotiation between the known and the unknown as described in the journey of the *Bildungsroman* (107). The slight elevation also helps him sort out which aspects of his father's *Bildung* to follow and which to rise above.

Although Martin mourns his father's death, the father's absence seems to make it easier for Martin to follow his own inclinations. In an ambiguous situation of caring for his father's legacy and estate and indulging in newly found freedom, Martin takes over his father's office while the rest of the family rather avoids being in the fatherless house at all. Martin dedicates the office to his newly discovered passion: "Nun findet der Vierzehnjährige sein vom Krieg erschüttertes Gleichgewicht wieder, indem er im Labor Molekülverbindungen zu kontrollierten Explosionen bringt und anschließend putzt" (The fourteen-year-old regains his equilibrium, which was affected by the war, by triggering controled explosions of molecular compounds and by cleaning up afterwards) (117). On one hand Martin seems to be dealing with the loss of his father; on the other hand, these activities seem to be an attempt at altering the environment of the office, to change the traces of the father in order to make it his own. When Martin rearranges his father's library fairly soon after his death, he makes clear that he does not simply accept and continue his father's *Bildungs*-legacy. He negotiates it and critiques it, as it becomes even

more evident in the comments he leaves on the margins of Heinrich's fatherly guidelines (278). Leo describes how, after Heinrich's death, Martin does not simply follow his father's guidelines by imagining the father's voice as his younger brother does; instead he carries on a dialogue with his absent father (278). Martin's loss of his father leads him to make decisions on what philosophy to pursue based on dialectical assessments of his father's heritage. Martin negates some aspects of it, while he continues others to find his individual perspective.

As Martin has an ambivalent and questioning relationship with his father to begin with, his life after his father's death is less affected by the loss of orientation than his younger brother's. Yet, possibly due to his discrepancies with his father, Martin is described as passionately seeking insight into "was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält." Thus he finds a holding environment in the most Goethean sense (Goethe, *Faust*: "whatever holds the world together in its inmost folds"). When the perspective of the closing circle of horizon from the steeple instills confidence in Martin as a boy, so later in his life does Anthroposophy: an esoteric movement founded by Rudolf Steiner that, among other things, spiritually cultivates Goethe's perceptive imagination within the context of modernity. Like Martin, Anthroposophy has a Protestant background and belongs to the numerous religious splinter groups of the beginning of the 20th century that sought spiritual renewal (*Flut* 254, 280-81). Thus, while a child of modernity, Anthroposophy offers spiritual shelter from its turmoil. More specifically, Steiner's teachings offer a modern but anti-industrialized and antirationalized version of almost every aspect of life: religion, education, medicine, agriculture, and finance. All of these areas of life build circular or rhythmic systems,

comparable to Goethe's circle of colors, and stand in a holistic relationship with each other.[19] There is little room for estrangement, and the holistic perspective provides a sense of home. It is a long path of inner development through exercising spiritual self-castigation which promises access to greater plateaus of existence.

Martin, who has been pitilessly exposed by his father to the triggers of his childhood anxieties, finds solace in the idea that spiritual beings protect him. The notion of reincarnation and transition into the spiritual world makes even death an unthreatening event:

> Alles liegt nun
> florumwoben.
> Schlaf umschmiegt nun
> Unten, oben
> Nur die fernen
> Fälle toben.
> Leise Geisterhände
> tragen
> mich vom Wagen
> in des Schlummers
> Traumgelände.
> Aller Notdurft,
> alles Kummers
> ganz befreit,
> fühle ich ein höheres Sein
> mich durchweben. (287-89).
>
> (Everything lies veiled.
> Cradled in sleep
> Below and above
> Only the distant falls
> Roar.
> Down from the wagon
> Silent spirit hands
> Transfer me
> Into slumber's land.
> Freed
> From all

[19] See Helmut Zander's chapter *Praxis* in *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis*.

Sorrows and Grief
I am enwrought
With a sense of a
higher being [translation mine])

Christian Morgenstern's poem *Auffahrt*, which Leo inserts epitaph-like to the description of Martin's death, reads like a gesture of comfort for the effects of the war-mongering, nationalist-Protestant teachings of Heinrich and his time, in which death is an imminent threat. Yet in the fold of Anthroposophy, Martin also finds a viable way to continue his father's intellectual legacy and appreciation for the essentialist thinking that is part of German *Bildungstradition,* and to compensate for the loss of his father. Thus Martin exemplifies how Steiner's philosophy is a way of thinking to compensate for his situation of abandonment similarly to how Steiner promoted Goethe's way of thinking as a source of meaning in a world in which the unknown became increasingly threatening.

While Heinrich's death renders an ambivalent situation for Martin, Friedrich, the younger of the two brothers, experiences a situation of more pronounced disintegration as he was more *in tune* with his father's values. As Heinrich's booklet about premilitary education bespeaks, he welcomes the military style in education and applies it, as discussed above, to his own parenting. Contrary to Martin, Friedrich responds well to his father's style: when asked what he wants to be when he grows up, his answer is "Reichsadler," foretelling his future desire to be part of a totalitarian system rather than choosing an individual profession (144). Posing for pictures in soldier costumes looks as convincing as if Friedrich sucked militarism in with his mother's milk: he is a born soldier and makes his father proud (145).

While Heinrich manages to pass on his affinity for nationalism and militarism to Friedrich, Leo describes how Heinrich's *Bildungstradtion* is literally lost on his youngest.

Heinrich dies when Friedrich has barely reached the age to enter grade school, and therefore is too young to have been his father's student. The coincidence of Heinrich's death and Friedrich's starting of school means that not only does Friedrich lose his father, but his teacher, too. Moreover, his school loses its teacher and closes altogether, as Heinrich is not the only teacher who is missing due to the war (*Flut* 147-48). School and higher education are, in the wider sense, associated with the loss of the father. For Friedrich, this is not a pleasant place to be as it underlines his feeling of abandonment.

In addition to the loss of the father, Friedrich, unlike Martin, is disliked by his grandmother. He is described as a troublemaker and disturbance in the family life that, after Heinrich's death, is dominated by female adults who appear to favor Martin and support the contemplative sensitive lifestyle that is foreign to Friedrich (152).

The missing father combined with critical and dominating maternal figures drive Friedrich to drop out of school, to leave home and seek the proximity to his lost father in the areas where he feels closest to him:

> Von wem der Junge nachts träumt und wen er sich heftig zurückwünscht, das ist nicht der Bewohner des luftigen Studierzimmers mit Wasserblick. Es ist der kräftige, erdverbundene Körper, der Wanderer und Soldat. Ihn wird er von jetzt an suchen, und da er nicht zu finden ist, will Friedrich schon bald nur noch eines vom Leben: die Gewissheit, dass sein Vater stolz auf ihn gewesen wäre. Was hätte er getan? – diese Frage wird ihm von nun an Halt borgen, den er in sich selbst nicht finden kann. (146)
>
> (The side of the father's personality the boy dreams about and which he wants back is not the one who resided in the lofty office with the view on the river. It is the strong, down-to-earth figure, the hiker and soldier in his father. He will continue to look for him from now on, and since he can't find him, Friedrich only wants one thing in life: the certainty that his father would have been proud of him. What would he have done in this situation? – this question will provide security from now on, which he doesn't have on his own).

Friedrich turns this imagined figure of his father into a guiding principle that leads him

away from higher education, the path his older brother chooses, away from the dominating grandmother, away from the city and into the countryside. It takes him to purely male associations, first to the German boy scouts, and from there to training in agriculture and forestry. Friedrich's rebellious reaction is driven by countryside-nostalgia and male bonds which both culminate in "land seizure" in the wider sense. After marrying—contrary to his social class—"a country girl," the rebellion leads Friedrich to the Artamans. This association was the precursor to the *Waffen SS* elites, such as Walther Darré and Heinrich Himmler, who established the Nazi politics of settlement according to *völkisch* parameters and who are Friedrich's future employers when he becomes head of the department of racial affairs at the *Waffen SS* (158-59).[20]

Friedrich represents an array of male anxieties, many of which connect with Mitscherlich's description of the effects of modern fatherlessness. One of the most significant symptoms of modernity, World War I, renders Friedrich literally fatherless. Friedrich expresses a sense of abandonment created by the invisibility of his father at the school and the female dominated household. Friedrich escapes the place, the city, which he associates with his father's loss and turns away to follow what his father represents to him. This situation signifies a transition to the structural fatherlessness of society described by Mitscherlich, according to whom modern urban life represents the invisibility of the father figure. Mitscherlich claims that a disrupted object relation in the

[20] George Mosse defines Volk as "the union of people with a transcendental 'essence.' This 'essence' might be called 'nature' or 'cosmos' or 'mythos,' but in each instance it was fused to man's innermost nature, and represented the source of his creativity, his depth of feeling, his individuality, and his unity with other members of the Volk. The essential element is the linking of the human soul with its natural surroundings, with the 'essence' of nature" (qtd. in Alan Cassels *Fascism* 85). Cassels describes in *Fascism* that *völkisch* thought gained particular popularity during German idealism: "the mystic element to *völkisch* thought seemed to appeal to the idealist strain" and "[t]oward the end of the nineteenth century, an important segment of German youth, in revulsion against the growing materialism of everyday life, turned naturally to *völkisch* ideas" (85). Thus *Völkisch* thought established itself as an antimodern undercurrent during Germany's path through industrialization.

familial situation leads to, to put it in Mitscherlich's words, "[s]parse signs of independent ego development [that] correspond to an ego ideal that is remote from reality, and the individual compensates for his impotence by megalomaniac fantasies. The idealized Führer fitted perfectly into this distorted, chimerical reality" (*Society* 281-82). Very similarly to Mitscherlich's assessment, a family in disarray due to circumstances related to modernity drives Friedrich searching for his father's nationalist voice and to the paramilitary youth culture that paves his path to the SS.

Martin and Friedrich both seek a strong ideological context to provide guidance in their uncertainty. Yet the two brothers show two divergent paths that the legacy of German *Weltanschauungskultur* could make available under the given circumstances of the turmoil of the early 20th century. On one hand, both brothers' insecurity and subsequent decision-making as young men might be described as greatly affected by their father's death as a loss of early-life orientation and guidance. On the other hand, Leo's depiction of Heinrich already entails far-reaching anxiety expressed in his fear of the effeminacy of Germany's modern youth, modern urban culture, and intellectualism, and his pronounced bellicose desire. All three major male figures in *Flut und Boden* reveal a form of abandonment and subsequent anxiety that tie into the key driving factor of German characterological thinking of the 19th century as described in *Der Wille zum Wesen*. This anxiety is firstly depicted in Goethe's contention with Newton's *Opticks*, which might be read as a fear of the profanation of man and thus—simply put—the deprivation of a divine father figure (which German idealism circumscribes as *das Wesenhafte* [the essence]). On a more abstract level, this deprivation corresponds to the increasing fragmentation of knowledge and society over the course of the 19th century,

which led to a revival of the Goethean way of thinking concerned with maintaining and reestablishing symbolic unity in a world of increasing multifariousness (Leo, *Der Wille* 582-83).

Martin's and Friedrich's situation of abandonment is a significant small link in a wide historical spectrum that connects the private sphere with the historical realm. The motif of the abandoned child serves to underline a heretofore hidden continuity of history by embedding a family's history profoundly within its comprehensive historical context. Due to the first person grandson and historian narrator, the continuity between *Der Wille* and *Flut und Boden*—between the 19th and the 20th century—does not stop in 1945 but goes on to impact the present. The abandoned child motif in Leo's texts shows both historicizing of the Holocaust and reveal its contemporary relevance. The abandoned child in Leo's texts represents both neutrality toward the past due to increased historicizing on one hand, and increased empathy in the approach due to the emphasis of and giving voice to the human connection that remains relevant today.

Conclusion

The circumstances of the abandoned child motif and what it represents in these texts shows the most significant step toward diversification compared to both previous chapters. World War II and the Holocaust play a role in each text, yet their heretofore central role in relationship to the abandoned child motif have undergone a shift in the texts discussed in Chapter 4. In *Tschick,* World War II has decreased in significance while other themes, such as post-*Wende* migration and multiculturalism, have come to the fore. *Landgericht* shows its decentralizing shift by focusing on a topic more peripheral to

World War II and the Holocaust: Jewish-German expellees and their return and attempt at reintegration into postwar West Germany. And Leo's texts show abandonment happening elsewhere, but as a major precursor to World War II and playing a culminating role in the formation of German perpetratorship. The abandoned child motif in all texts discussed in Chapter 4 commonly reflects enlarged distance and a new sense of detachment toward Germany's 20th century, but at the same time they reveal a new empathy towards their characters and the past through their various ways of giving voice to the heretofore unheard and marginalized.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In his elaboration of sovereign power in *Homo Sacer* (1995, Engl. 1998), Giorgio Agamben illustrates the situation of exception with the help of the term *abandoned*:

> we shall give the name *ban* (from the old Germanic term that designates both exclusion from the community and the command and insignia of the sovereign) to this potentiality … of the law to maintain itself in its own privation, to apply in no longer applying …. He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable …. (This is why in Romance languages, to be "banned" originally means both to be "at the mercy of" and "at one's own will, freely," to be "excluded" and also "open to all, free.") …. The matchless potentiality of the *nomos, its originary* "*force of law,*" is that it holds life in its ban by abandoning it. (28-29)

Agamben's concept of abandonment is situated in the political context of sovereign power. He illustrates how abandonment describes the one who is excluded from the law not only as disconnected from it, but how through abandonment the connection to the law remains inherent as well. That means, the abandoned one is excluded from and included in the law at the same time, as the law, in banning him, has power over him. Thus, the stem of word a*band*oned entails both, the unvoluntary separation (as it is dictated by a higher power), as well as the unvoluntary connection to the entity from which one is

abandoned.[1] However, abstracted from this context and placed into German memory culture, abandonment's nature as a threshold situation applies well to the abandoned child motif in German contemporary literature at the end of the 20th and in the early 21st century. In a more abstract interpretation of Agamben's assessment, abandonment, while representing one thing, always also refers to the other. Abandonment in the German postwar context entails on one hand loss and victimization. On the other hand, it is a situation of victimhood which always reverberates the country's guilt. German texts around the turn of the millennium stage the abandoned child as a motif that is situated on the threshold between remembering and forgetting, victim and perpetrator, and between the past and the present. In this position, it serves as a seismograph for shifts in German memory culture, starting with the *Wende* and reaching into the second decade of the 21st century.

The abandoned child motif in German cultural memory texts of that timeframe illustrates shifts that include the focus on the past and the victim perpetrator dichotomy as well as German guilt and suffering. It is an expression of changes in generational conflicts and gender issues and of common identity markers, all while indicating an increasing diversity of relational dynamics and increased motion and complexity in German memory culture.

While still showing significant autobiographical ties to the *Kriegskind* (German war baby) and to the generational conflict of the 68er generation, the authors' use of the abandoned child motif in texts originating during the years around the *Wende* reveals an urge to depart from the dichotomies of West German postwar memory culture. The

[1] The German language illustrates the relationship between the two opposing states including the Germanic word *ban* in the terms *verbannt* (banished) and *gebannt* (under a spell of, fascinated with something).

abandoned child motif in *Der Himmel über Berlin* and *Austerlitz* is associated with symbolic conciliatory gestures toward Jews. While *Der Himmel* seeks to leave the past behind and look into the future, the abandoned child motif in *Austerlitz* serves the purpose of remembering. *Austerlitz* shows the desire to evolve from former ways of looking at the past by focusing on the story of a Jewish child Holocaust survivor. Nonetheless, the perspective of the German second generation is strongly represented as well. The significant representation of German suffering within the typical postwar West German family conflict in *Der Verlorene* is a sign of evolving German memory culture after the *Wende*. The inclusion of German wartime experiences changes the family dynamics substantially compared to preceding German novels depicting postwar family conflicts. Therefore *Der Verlorene* reveals a new degree of self-reflection within the second generation perspective. Despite this, however, the texts discussed in Chapter 2 are still strongly influenced by the characteristics of second generation perspective. They are still overshadowed by events experienced during the war or in the immediate postwar years, the bipolar pattern of the parental conflict, and its focus on the male voice.

The most far-reaching shift is noticeable between the texts of Chapters 2 and 3. It reflects a generational turn and a significant increase in female voices. These two aspects have substantial influence on the function and contextualization of the abandoned child motif and thus the outlook on the past. In many ways, the texts of Chapter 3 reflect a response to the male-dominated parental conflict occupying the perspective of the second generation. Rather than the binary relationship of child and parents, these texts go beyond the generational pattern by including the perspective of the third generation, the so-called *Enkelgeneration*. To various degrees, the texts delineate a third-generation viewpoint

structuring their connection to the past and thus still mainly focus on World War II and the Holocaust. However, they also depict heterogeneous groups of related and unrelated characters of whom many show different aspects of childhood abandonment and various ties to the past. Thus childhood abandonment is no longer only a symptom of World War II. Instead, the situation of abandonment is interwoven in a larger historical network of causes and effects. Furthermore, in most of the texts the time-window to the past has become larger, often including prewar history in their development of narrative.

As the characters represented in the texts of Chapter 3 are more heterogeneous, the texts include multiple different voices, of which the female voice is most dominant, but increasingly include Jewish perspectives, as well. Thus these texts show, much more than the texts of Chapter 2, a tendency to disrupt former dualities of gender, Germans and Jews, and victim and perpetrators, producing often dual identities. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Vees-Gulani claim in their introduction to *Generational Shift in Contemporary German Culture*: "freer and more nuanced in their approach to the German past, the third generation, or *Enkelgeneration*, … has been deemed to view this legacy [of World War II and the Holocaust] with a new sobriety" (6). While this assessment holds true for the texts of Chapter 3, the abandoned child motif in these texts also reveals how the grandparents' burden of guilt was passed on to the third generation despite the nuanced, sober, and supposedly freer approach.

The diversity of the causes of childhood abandonment increases even more in the texts discussed in the third chapter. The abandoned child motif no longer clearly references a homogeneous generational pattern or a focus on World War II or the Holocaust. The writers' own generational position and autobiographical aspects play a

much less significant role in the portrayal of the abandoned child. The abandoned child motif in all texts discussed in Chapter 4 reflects an increased distance and a new sense of detachment toward Germany's 20th century. At the same time, the texts contextualize the abandoned child motif in a larger historical framework. Within that larger framework the abandoned child motif reveals German specific aspects, often in the form of continuities, which are, in various ways, still relevant to Germany in the 21st century. More than a generational shift, the abandoned child motif in these texts signifies Germany having entered a new, much more globalized era. The abandoned child motif raises more general questions pertaining to the country's contemporary position as a strong political and economic power and country of immigration in relationship to both the contemporary global context stricken by various cultural conflicts, and to its still problematic past.

The abandoned child motif situated between global conflicts and the German position finds its continuation in Jenny Erpenbeck's 2015 novel *Gehen, ging, gegangen* (To Go, Went, Gone), short-listed for the German Book Prize of the same year. The novel is written in the third-person perspective of a professor emeritus of the classics, Richard—a representative of the (East) German second generation—who is mostly bored in his retired life. After learning about a group of protesting African refugees in Berlin, he actively engages with the group who struggles with the legal complications of their immigration status. Richard, who has no children, takes on a father position for the young African men, who, stranded in Berlin, might be seen as abandoned by the global community. Richard helps the refugees—who have suffered through a number of traumatic ordeals—with the challenges German jurisdiction and bureaucracy impose on them. Richard and the African refugees grow closer while Richard tries to make sense of

their situation. Many times he compares their situation with images from his repertoire of *Bildung*, including situations from Greek epics or Mozart's operas, which come across as awkward and inappropriate. Despite his impressive philanthropic gesture, Richard's comparisons underline his sense of superiority over the refugees and the cultural gap between him and his new friends.

More than in any text analyzed in this project, the abandoned child motif reveals in *Gehen, ging, gegangen* the shift away from the past toward the international globalized context underlining Germany's and its residents' position regarding issues such as immigration and interculturalism. Erpenbeck reflects matters revolving around political refugees, who are, in many cases, abandoned by multiple sovereign powers in Agamben's sense of the term. Due to the tremendous impact of migration in the second decade of the 21st century, issues revolving around migration are an important aspect of life in Germany in the middle of the 2010s. While Germany's past remains relevant in the increased multicultural and global context in the beginning of the 21st century, the perspective of it in German cultural texts increasingly follows a historicizing trend. As the familial lineage to World War II and the Holocaust becomes less represented in German cultural memory texts, the abandoned child motif as a symptom of war and political change shifts its context toward more contemporary and globalized themes. Issues related to Germany's past intersect increasingly with 21st-century multicultural circumstances rendering a more complex and more hybrid memory culture.

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